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THE HISTORY
OF THE
RADICAL PARTY IN PARLIAMENT

THE HISTORY
OF THE
RADICAL PARTY IN PARLIAMENT

BY
WILLIAM HARRIS



LONDON
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1885



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NOTE.

THE main authority for the history of events which have taken place in Parliament must be the record of the proceedings in the Houses themselves. Such a record, continuous for the whole period dealt with in this book, is formed by THE PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY and HANSARD'S DEBATES. That work is divided into various series, an arrangement which interferes with the titles and the consecutive numbering of the volumes, but the chronological order is unbroken throughout. In all cases, therefore, of speeches, debates, and divisions referred to, the dates have been given in text or note, and it is thought that this will afford a sufficient and convenient means of verification, without adding the more cumbrous method of giving in each instance the name of the series and the number of the volume and the page.

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ERRATA.

Page 91, line 4, *after* "sympathy" *insert* "with."

„ 109, line 32, *for* "previous" *read* "beginning of the."

„ 110, line 11, *for* "this year" *read* "in 1813."

„ 110, lines 22 and 23, *after* "magnate" *the sentence should read* "and son of
George Grenville, a former Whig Premier."

„ 215, lines 28 and 29, *for* "Sir H. Ingliss" *read* "Sir R. Inglis."

„ 249, line 7, *for* "Dinett" *read* "Divett."

THE HISTORY

OF THE

RADICAL PARTY IN PARLIAMENT.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—ORIGIN OF THE PARTY.

THE growth and development of political parties follow the same general laws as those which affect and govern other social organisms. A party is sometimes spoken of as a piece of mechanism which can be formed at will, which is absolutely distinct from other associations of the same kind, and the outlines of which can be definitely and sharply drawn. Such a description can apply only to special combinations for particular purposes. The Anti-Corn Law League and its supporters might have been called the free-trade party ; and on the other side we have had what called itself the fair-trade party. Such organizations, however, are not parties in the proper sense of the term ; they are not the result of the natural cohesion of men accepting the same general principles and ready to apply them to special cases as they occur, but rather combinations of people who, whatever their general principles, are willing to co-operate for a special purpose. Men holding the most divergent views as to the true laws of government, could, and did, combine to effect the repeal of

the corn laws ; but their aggregation did not form a political party which could survive the adoption of the one object, and devote itself to affecting the broad general lines of national policy. This is to be taken as applying not to the individual members of the league, but to the particular organization itself. Its founders and main supporters, if not in numbers, at least in power, were members of a wider party, and were the result of its growth and the occasion of its further development ; but in that respect the league was an instrument which they used, and not an organism of which they were parts.

Let us now take an example—the most important, perhaps, in our history, and sufficiently remote to enable us to examine it with impartiality—of the manner in which natural party characteristics survive, and more conscious and artificial combinations die out. In the struggle between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians in the seventeenth century, the two most elementary parties into which a nation can be divided, and which in every community exist in a more or less developed state, came into inevitable contest. The principles of authority on the one side and of liberty on the other were opposed in the most direct manner. These two ideas are both essential to the existence of society and to the exercise of the functions of government ; yet they are so essentially distinct, and, under certain circumstances, so conflicting, that they form centres towards which individual natures, with varying tendencies and sympathies, are attracted in natural groups. They may be regarded as vital powers, each struggling to preserve its own existence, and which, although they are ultimately reconcilable, are for a time fiercely antagonistic.

We should have to go much further back if we wished to trace the time when the first divergence took place, and in a community all practically accepting the idea of a personal authority, there were some who desired to place limits to its exercise, and who by degrees became wise enough to devise and strong enough to enact regular constitutional checks.

We have to consider a later time, when King and Parliament formed the centres round which were ranged the lovers of authority on one side and of liberty on the other. The two parties were not entirely homogeneous, nor could the line of demarcation between them be clearly and sharply drawn. There was so much difference between the two wings of either army, and so much sympathy between what were called the moderate sections of the two, as might be expected if their development as parties was the result of natural social growth. Falkland and Essex, although fighting in opposite camps, were nearer in sympathy to each other than the former was to Strafford or the latter to Harrison. The main lines, however, were always discernible ; popular rights on one side, and personal power on the other, were arrayed in opposition. So far the party distinctions were evidently the result of the action of natural laws, of the gradual growth and development of social and intellectual germs. But the excitement of the times gave to this growth an abnormal impetus, and produced a political structure which could not find permanent nourishment either in the intelligence or the sympathies of the mass of the people. The republic was the *thorough* of Liberalism, which opposed itself to the autocratic *thorough* of the King and Strafford. Such a form of government may prove to be the natural result and outcome of the ideas of liberty and popular rights, but it was then produced out of due time, and even if the life continued, the outer form decayed. So that what was seen when the crisis passed away was a return largely to the old state of things, with this difference—that both of the naturally formed parties, that of authority and that of liberty, were considerably modified. The extreme section of absolutists, with their idea of divine right, began to die out, and the process was so continuous and rapid that, if not as a theory, at least as an element of English politics, it has become a mere rudimentary survival, an embryotic function, representing an instrument which in earlier times society was able to oppose to the dreaded evils of lawlessness and anarchy. In that direction there is no

further growth. At the same time, the development which had taken place at the other end of the scale, and which produced the Radicalism of the republic, although nipped and checked, was not killed. The old form was gone, but the seeds of life still existed, and, under more temperate and natural surroundings, the idea has grown in spite of, or perhaps in consequence of, difficulties which have called into being its strongest faculties, and have led to its survival in the political struggle.

During the period which immediately followed the Restoration, that struggle continued to be one between two old parties. In 1688 the triumph remained with the Liberals, and it was not unnatural that the methods and instruments by which it had been accomplished should be formulated, and regarded as the only possible conditions of Liberal life, and thus Whiggism became a sort of creed. But the hardening of creeds is the death of religions, and the life of Liberalism had to find for itself some new form. The idea of popular rights could not be permanently embodied in a group of noble houses, nor in a definite parliamentary system of limited constituencies. To some extent—to a great extent indeed—this spirit infused itself, in the course of time, in nearly all sections of the Liberal party ; but it was forced upon the attention of the old Whigs by the left wing of the party, and there were always some of the acknowledged leaders by whom it was not accepted. It must be borne in mind that this new spirit affected not only the methods of government—the legislative machinery—but also the objects to be aimed at, the legislation to be achieved. The two things, indeed, are inseparably connected. Freedom and self-government are essential elements in the happiness and nobility of a people, and the supposed interests of the governing class—be that class large or small—will affect the character of its legislation.

If, then, there is any reality or any usefulness in the existence of a Radical party, it will employ its energies in two directions—in the endeavour to extend political rights and

duties; and in the effort to promote, as far as law can fairly do so, the diffusion amongst the whole people of the real blessings of civilization, material, intellectual, and moral. A considerable part of such a programme would be the common property of all Liberals ; but if we find in one section of them an increasing recognition of the necessity of consciously devoting the powers of government to the service of the Democracy, we may profitably trace the growth and development of that section into the separate entity which we call the Radical party. We must, however, limit this inquiry to the presence and operation of the party in Parliament. It is only in the legislature that direct and immediate influence can be exercised over the principles and policy of the government. Until it can find expression there, no cause and no party can be said to be within the range of practical politics. Any change forced upon the nation by powers extraneous to Parliament would, if possible at all, be revolution, and not reform. None such has taken place within the period covered by our inquiry. What has often occurred is, that certain questions have been debated and agitated for by people outside before they have found organized support inside Parliament. But the history of the formation and discussion of social and political ideas in the community at large, would be at once too extensive and too indefinite for our present purpose, which is to ascertain not how ideas originate, but how certain classes of them obtain expression in policy and law. The former object would be the work of the science of sociology ; the latter may furnish a manageable chapter in political history. So far as it is really effective, it will deal with the same natural laws of growth and evolution, but it will only attempt to observe them as they are manifested within specific limits of time, place, and circumstance.

If this theory of the development of the party is sound, we must not expect to be able to fix any precise and definite date for its birth. We may, however, trace, either in the ranks of the Liberals in Parliament or among the people outside, the action of causes which would lead to new combinations.

We may also watch the introduction of ideas and principles likely to attract one section of the Whigs and repel another, or calculated to attract the attention and incite the interest of persons and classes who had hitherto held aloof from political work. When any special excitement is produced on great questions this tendency to definite organization may be suddenly awakened into active life, as when water is upon the point of freezing, a touch or a breath will expedite the process and seem to serve as the immediate cause of crystallization. Such circumstances did arise in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and they were sufficiently marked to form a political era.

Mr. Lecky—agreeing in that with Wingrove Cooke—ventures to be more precise, and to fix the actual year in which he thinks the party was born. He says, "The year 1769 is very memorable in political history, for it witnessed the birth of English Radicalism, and the first serious attempt to reform and control Parliament by a pressure from without, making its members habitually subservient to their constituents." * This statement is a great deal too definite as regards dates, and that perhaps arises from a misconception by the writer of the distinguishing feature of the new party. It is a mistake to suppose that it was a novel idea characteristic of the Radicals, that outside opinion ought to influence the action of Parliament. That, on the contrary, was the strongly expressed opinion of the old Whigs, as opposed to those now called Radicals; the latter seeking rather some constitutional means for representing larger numbers of the people, and representing them more purely, in the legislature itself. The external pressure theory was urged strongly by Burke, who, in this and all other branches of political opinion and philosophy, was the ablest exponent of Whig principles; and he constantly proposes it as a means whereby constitutional reform, which he disliked, might be rendered unnecessary and prevented.

* "History of England in the Eighteenth Century," vol. iii. p. 174; Wingrove Cooke, "History of Parties," vol. iii. p. 188 *et seq.*

In his "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents," Burke says, "I see no other way for the preservation of a decent attention to public interest in the representatives but the interposition of the body of the people itself." Mr. Morley fairly summarizes Burke's view on this point. "Against the system of the omnipotence of the administration," he says, "Burke called on the nation to set a stern face. 'Root it up,' he kept crying; 'settle the general course in which you desire members to go; insist that they shall not suffer themselves to be diverted from this by the authority of the Government of the day; let lists of votes be published, so that you may ascertain for yourselves whether your trustees have been faithful or fraudulent;—do all this, and then there will be no need to resort to those organic changes, those empirical innovations, which may possibly cure, but are much more likely to destroy.'"^{*} It is true that he at the same time objected to *authoritative mandates* given by a constituency to its members, but all the same he constantly urged the efficiency of popular pressure as a substitute for organic change.

The Radicals, then, were striving for some legal and settled reform; the Whigs, resisting constitutional modifications, advocated a plan of irregular outside agitation, which was in their own minds indefinite, and which, if it ever became definite, must have become revolutionary. It was not therefore characteristic either of the old Whigs or of the new Radicals, that either of them appealed to public opinion as a power in the State. The distinction was, that one set of men would have used it in order to strengthen the traditional forms into which Parliamentary Liberalism had been moulded, whilst the others wanted to give it permanent and recognized force in the official government of the country.

Whilst it is impossible to point with certainty to any particular year as marking the origin of a party whose existence was the result not of an act of creation, but of growth and development, it is quite possible to refer to a time when movements took place amongst the Whigs, which led to the

^{*} "Men of Letters—Burke," p. 58.

grouping of different sections round particular leaders and in defence of special ideas, and which gave to politicians, without traditional or family connections with them, the desire to appeal to a wider constituency. This period, which on other accounts may be taken as almost the starting-point of a new era in our political history, was the beginning of the reign of George III. It was then that the old fight between royal prerogative and popular liberty was recommenced, but under conditions very different to those which had marked the cessation of the former conflict between the two forces. In the struggle with the later Stuarts, the people had found in Parliament an instrument which was sufficient for the purpose of opposing despotism and maintaining constitutional government. But the institution, which was at that time vital, had since become mechanical. It was regarded, partly by classes whose special interests it served, and partly by the general reverence of the country whose liberties it had protected, as sacred in form as well as beneficial in spirit. Under the first two Georges there was no danger that the Crown would either encroach upon the domain of Parliamentary power or use Parliament itself for autocratic purposes. But this very freedom from royal interference, and the preponderance of Whig principles which made outward struggle unnecessary, led to internal corruptions; so that when George III. and his immediate advisers came to examine the position with a view of reconstructing the personal power of the monarch, they found the process so far advanced that the King was able to bribe, to intimidate, and to corrupt with as much freedom as Walpole had done or as Newcastle was doing. The constitutional machine was weakened, and if it were not amended and strengthened it must become amenable either to irregular pressure from the people or to the direction and dictation of the Crown.

Before the accession of the new King it had been proved, by the success of Pitt, that whatever might be the completeness of the Whig system of Parliamentary management, a decided manifestation of public feeling was sufficient to

overpower an institution which was strong only by its traditions, and not by its representative character. And when Henry Fox * openly set to work, in 1762, to buy a majority in favour of the treaty which closed the war, it became evident that the old barrier against despotic power was not calculated to resist the new weapons which were directed against it. All real Liberals, therefore, came to see that some change was necessary, and it is in the choice of methods by which the alteration was to be effected that the process of differentiation of Whigs and Radicals is to be traced. The difference is discernible in more than one great question, but it was not at the time recognized as making a distinct division in the party. Neither at that early period, nor for a long time afterwards, did any set of men announce that they held opinions which separated them from the rest of the Liberals, and that they intended to form a new party. A political party, let us repeat, cannot be created in that manner; it must grow, and it is because it has silently and gradually been developed in this manner, that the Radical party is at length seen to be an operative power in the State.

In some way or other actual entities get themselves distinctive names, but it was long after the first signs of its existence were manifested that the name of Radical was given to the party. Harriet Martineau, writing of the year 1819, says, "It is stated to have been now that the reformers first assumed the name of Radicals." † The name was certainly given, or taken, in immediate connection with an agitation for parliamentary reform, but it has from time to time been used, and properly used, to designate those who not only sought directly to increase the power of the democratic element in the government, but who tried to utilize existing institutions for obtaining some material, intellectual, or social advantages for the unrepresented masses of the people.

The fixing of a name was not only in itself a proof of the public recognition of distinctive aims and methods, but it led

* Afterwards Lord Holland.

† "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. i. p. 226.

naturally to efforts to define those aims and describe those methods. As to objects, Carlyle, writing in 1840, says, "Radical members, above all, friends of the people, chosen with effort by the people to interpret and articulate the dumb, deep want of the people! To a remote observer, they seem oblivious of their duty. Are they not there, by trade, mission, and express appointment of others, to speak for the good of the British nation? Whatsoever great British interest can the least speak for itself, for that, beyond all, they are called to speak. They are either speakers for that great dumb, toiling class which cannot speak, or they are nothing that one can well specify." * As to method, Miss Martineau, when dealing with the state of parties at the death of George IV., contrasts generally three systems of government. "On every account it was a good thing that the old Tory rule was broken up, but chiefly for this—that when the thing was done by strong compulsion of fact, of necessity men were beginning to look for the principle of the change, and thereby to obtain some insight into the views of the parties that had governed, or would or might govern, the country. Men began to have some practical conception that the Tories thought it their duty to govern the people (for their good) as a disposable property; that the Whigs thought it their duty to govern as trustees of the nation, according to their own discretion; and that there were persons living, and effectually moving in the world of politics, who thought that the people ought to govern themselves through the House of Commons." †

We find, then, that immediately after the accession of George III., a series of events took place which involved important changes in the position and principles of English political parties. Amongst those changes was such a movement in the ranks of the Whigs as was equivalent to a break-up and reconstruction of their party, which from that time ceased to be identical with the general body of Liberals. In the course of this action there was gradually formulated a

* "Chartism," p. 5.

† "History of The Thirty Years' Peace," vol. i. p. 555.

series of ideas, tending to the increase of the popular power, around which were concentrated at different times groups of politicians in and out of Parliament, not always composed of the same persons—various objects attracting individuals with varying force. There was, however, a tendency to unite amongst those who were most frequently and most generally agreed; and by such union again there was more clearly defined a common programme, and the way was opened to the existence of a new party. This movement, like every other manifestation of active political life in England, was arrested by the events which followed the French Revolution. It resumed its progress after the peace so definitely that a distinctive name had to be found, and in a few years after, historians recognized the fact that the new party, under the new name, was exercising an important influence on the national policy.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE III. TO THE DEATH OF
CHATHAM (1760—1778).

THE long reign of the Whigs was shaken by the defeat of Walpole, but it was shaken by a coalition of which Whigs like Pulteney and Townshend were leading members. It was restored apparently with all its old force under the Pelhams, but the *Patriots* had appealed to a power with which the party managers could not ultimately deal. That public opinion which had led to the dethronement of Walpole, afterwards forced Pitt upon an unwilling monarch and an unfriendly Cabinet; and Pitt was determined to rely not upon the placemen who merely tolerated him, but upon the people who really trusted and loved him. Throughout his whole career he declared his intention to break the trammels of party. There were occasions on which this resolution seemed to act disastrously for the interests of the nation, as when he refused to ally himself with the Rockingham Whigs. There is no doubt that Burke's argument in favour of party allegiance under a Parliamentary system is unanswerable. Representative government will be impossible if men who are generally of the same way of thinking will not consent to so far modify their individual views as, whilst preserving their principles, will enable them to agree upon the details in which those principles are to be embodied. But the circumstances of the time were peculiar, and, in Pitt's opinion, the rule of the Whig oligarchy was as much opposed to political freedom as would have been an absolute monarchy itself.

When George III. ascended the throne, this first inroad upon Whig supremacy had been made, and the new King and his advisers soon opened an attack still more effective upon the forces of the old party. When the old struggles between Tories and Whigs had ended in so complete a triumph of the latter that there was practically no opposition, and therefore no need to appeal to the feelings or the passions of the nation, the chief machine of government became what was known as Parliamentary influence. This consisted of two or three branches. There was first the possession of pocket boroughs ; then the use of bribery and of official power and corruption in constituencies ; and lastly, the direct purchase of votes in Parliament itself, either by money or place. All these instruments, which had been used with such vigour by Walpole, and were employed even more unscrupulously by Newcastle, the King and his advisers began to adopt. Some of them, especially those which depended upon the possession of places and the command of public money, were as easily available to the Crown as to its ministers. The effect was soon seen in the presence in Parliament of the body of political creatures called the King's friends, who opposed in turn every minister who did not obey the royal behests, and voted not in accordance with any principle or in unison with any party, but simply in obedience to the word of command from the sovereign. There had always existed in the House of Commons a small phalanx of Tory members, representing some of the counties, who hated the Whigs and loved the prerogative. These men could not give willing service or affection to either of the two first Georges, but they had no difficulty in transferring their active allegiance from the hopeless cause of the Stuarts to an English-born king holding Tory views. Besides these, which may be called the main constitutional forces, there were to be noticed one set of men, not numerous or powerful enough to be called a party, but able always to make themselves heard and often to make themselves felt. The city of London and most of the constituencies where city influence reached, were still possessed with the same love of liberty

which had made them the strongholds of the old enemies of despotic power. The representatives sent from these places, and the outside leaders of opinion, were sometimes men of more force than delicacy, but they had to do work from which more refined people might shrink. They were persistent alike in outside agitation and in Parliamentary duty, and they furnished a contingent which gave support to whichever section of the old party took the most advanced view on the subject of the day. They were assisted by a few of the representatives of populous counties, and there, if anywhere, could be found the germs in which might be traced the first signs of the life of the future Radical party.

In spite of all contending forces, however, the power of government had not passed, and could not for some time pass out of Whig hands. Macaulay exaggerates the case when he says, "On the day of the accession of George III. the ascendancy of the Whig party terminated, and on that day the purification of the Whig party began." * For one thing, all the practical governing ability, all the knowledge of affairs, all the official experience, were in the hands of one section or other of the party. Two years after his accession the King could make Bute Premier and Dashwood Chancellor of the Exchequer, but he could not give them the ability to direct the affairs of the country or to manage the House of Commons, so that one or other Whig chief had to be called in, either Grenville or Newcastle or Rockingham, for even in its division the party was indispensable. These very divisions, manifested at a time when new political ideas were beginning to be discussed and new influences to be exercised, give to this period its especial value for our particular purpose. It is in the break-up and reconstitution of parties that we are best able to watch the manner in which these principles and influences impressed themselves upon different minds, and how they served to unite in fresh bonds, or finally to sever, men who had hitherto been connected by conditions which were now ceasing to exist.

* Second Essay on Chatham.

Three subjects now come up for consideration of not merely temporary importance, but raising questions affecting the authority of Government, the rights and liberties of individuals, and the true source of political power. The first and in every way the most important of these three subjects was the struggle between England and the North American Colonies. This contest involved constitutional questions of the gravest character, the ultimate issue being nothing less than the authority to deal with the properties, rights, and liberties of a people by any government not chosen by and directly representing them. Much ingenuity has been employed in discussing whether or not the taxation of the colonies was technically justified by the English law and custom of the time. But the case was one which went too deep for the letter of law and precedent to settle ; it was one of fundamental right in accordance with which laws have to get themselves made, and not one which could be answered by mechanical law. If we look not only at the vital consequence of the issue, but at the vehemence and heat by which its discussion was soon surrounded, it is astonishing to see with what absolute indifference its first introduction was attended. The Stamp Act was passed in 1765, with scarcely any discussion at all in Parliament. Colonel Barré was one of the very few members of the House of Commons reported by the Parliamentary History as having spoken against it. But the manner in which it was received in America put another complexion upon the matter. In 1766 it was found necessary to repeal the Act, and the discussions which then ensued, and the views taken by different sections of politicians, are characteristic and instructive.

There were three main lines on which opinions ran. In the first place, there was the doctrine of the absolute authority of the Imperial Government over the lives and liberties of its subjects either in America or elsewhere. This was, of course, the view taken by the King, by the King's friends, by the Tories, and by all, in fact, to whom the principle of authority—more or less tinged with the flavour of divine right—was

accepted as the basis of their policy. But the people named were not alone in maintaining this opinion, or, at all events, in supporting the course of action to which it pointed: the two Grenvilles, Lord Temple and his brother George, were both strongly against repealing the Stamp Act, and they were supported by other Whigs.

The second position was, that Parliament had of right the power of taxing the colonies, but that it was inexpedient and practically unjust to do so. This was essentially the Whig doctrine, and it was held by the Ministry, which proposed at the same time the repeal of the Stamp Act, and the passing of a declaratory Act saving the whole power of the English Parliament. The two parts of the proposition were supported with different degrees of earnestness by the several members of the Government. Burke always dwelt upon the folly and wickedness of exercising the power, which he yet acknowledged to exist, and the very ablest and noblest of his contributions to political philosophy were devoted to this subject. The Duke of Grafton, when introducing the Declaratory Resolution, announced his opinion to be "that the Americans were as liable to be taxed as any man in Great Britain."

The third view taken of the question was, that it was a violation of fundamental and constitutional right for the English Government to tax the Americans, who were not represented in Parliament. Pitt strongly maintained this position. Speaking on the 14th of January, 1766, he says distinctly, "It is my opinion that this kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the colonies." His great friend and follower, Lord Camden, was quite as definite. With regard to the Stamp Act, he said, "In my own opinion, my lords, the legislature had no right to make the law." This may be fairly called the Radical doctrine; it was held by a minority only in either House, but it was the only ultimate logical reply to the Tory creed of an inherent authority in Government to rule its subjects in accordance with its own will. Pitt, it is true, made a distinction between this right of taxation and

all other powers of Government which he maintained to be possessed by England over the colonies ; and he either suggested, or at all events supported, the idea of a Parliamentary declaration of these powers when the Stamp Act was repealed. The declaration actually made, however, was not in accordance with his avowed opinions, which were expressed in the House of Lords by Camden, who said, "The resolution now proposed is in my opinion too general, as it gives the legislature an absolute power of laying a tax on America."

The Annual Register of 1766, at that time conducted by Burke, recognized and set out the three sets of opinions which were held by different parties on the American question, and especially alluded to Pitt as denying the rights of Parliament to tax the colonists. Pitt and his friends assisted Rockingham in obtaining the repeal of the Stamp Act, but the difference between doing this in obedience to a broad constitutional principle which denied the right to tax an unrepresented people and doing it as an act of political expediency, was soon fatally manifest. The distinction which Pitt raised between the taxing power and the other powers of Government was scarcely definable, and not at all capable of practical maintenance. The next year, when the great minister—then Earl of Chatham—was in office, duties were levied on glass, paper, and pasteboard, red lead and colours, and tea, and the signal thereby given which led to the war and the independence of the colonies. This was in the first stages of that long illness which seemed to shroud the mind as much as it prostrated the body of the minister ; but he was evidently more impressed with the duty of asserting the general power of government than of sustaining the constitutional right on which he had before insisted, and the place that he left was not filled on this occasion by any other champion, so that the new Act was passed as easily and with as little opposition as that which had been recently repealed.

The history of the unhappy conflict which ensued has not to be dealt with here ; it is sufficient to notice the failure of the efforts in which, on his recovery, Chatham joined with the

Rockingham Whigs to undo the mischief which had been done. It became evident to all earnest Liberals that the colonists were upholding not only their own cause, but the cause of freedom in the whole of the British dominions. They were fighting not on behalf of the wise policy of the Whigs, but for the right of subjects to be taxed only with their own consent, and governed only by their own representatives. The circumstances attending the first discussions raised the all-important questions, and they point clearly to the existence among active politicians of opinions which could never form part of the official Whig or Tory programmes, and must therefore lead sooner or later to the growth of a third party in the State. During this period questions very vitally affecting home liberties divided with the American question the attention of the country and Parliament, and at times aroused passions in a manner which only feelings of personal animosity could account for. Freedom of the subject as affected by the right of Government to issue general warrants; freedom of the press as secured by the right of juries to decide on law as well as on fact, in cases of libel, and as affected by the power of publishing the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament; freedom of election threatened by the assumption of the Commons, that by their sole resolution they could declare any particular person to be ineligible for election;—all these great subjects were raised, directly or indirectly, through the conduct of one man, who, however unworthy either by character, position, or ability to take the lead in a national movement, must certainly be regarded as an instrument by which valuable results were achieved.

John Wilkes was one of those reckless people who rush with delight into positions from which more delicate natures shrink, and by their very extravagance irritate the powers they attack into violent proceedings that must end in failure in any country where law is more powerful than personal authority. However personally unpleasant such men may be, they often furnish the only possible method of testing the justice of an administration of law which aims merely at preserving the

respectabilities of social life. Wilkes shocked a great many worthy people when he attacked the King's favourite, the King's mother, and even the King himself, and the shock was the more severe because it was administered by a man who was known to be loose in his moral character; but the same issues could never have been raised by mild speaking and gentle criticism. He has been accused of having taken up politics only as a resource when his fortunes were ruined and his character lost; but niceness of morality and purity of political motives were not universal in the public men of the time, and Wilkes, at all events, sought to serve not the class who were dispensers of wealth and honours, but that great body of the people who were too frequently regarded by placemen and party managers as machines to be used and property to be disposed of. Throughout the term of his active political career, Wilkes, although violent in his language, and affected and histrionic in his proceedings, was yet consistent in the advocacy of a really liberal policy, which should protect popular liberties and extend popular rights.

Throughout this continuous and most important struggle the Whig party was divided, and there was the greatest confusion in the ranks. Burke and some of the Rockingham section were earnest in their defence of constitutional rights and individual liberty, but there was no definite acknowledgment of principles which could bind the whole party. George Grenville, the Duke of Bedford, and Lord Sandwich, were in the government which issued the general warrant; and the Duke of Grafton and Lord Weymouth were amongst the ministers who proposed and carried the resolutions disqualifying Wilkes from serving, and declaring Luttrell duly elected. Grenville on the last occasion was in opposition, and strongly resisted the disqualifying proposal; and, indeed, many of the party leaders took different views on the same kind of questions, according as they were in or out of office. Chatham was throughout, on these as on all great constitutional questions, on the side of freedom; but Chatham would not call himself a Whig, and would not act as a member of the

party. The last of these struggles—that which was waged over the right of publishing the debates of Parliament—was marked by similar circumstances. Chatham, Burke, Grenville, and many of the Whigs, were on the popular side, but they could not rally the strength of the party, and the majorities by which the right of printing was opposed were much larger even than those usually obtained by the Government.

Throughout the whole of this series of efforts to obtain and to secure the liberty of the press, the strength of the Liberal side lay not with the ordinary leaders in Parliament, but with the popular feeling outside, represented by a few determined men in the House. It was in the City of London especially that the fight was most vehemently maintained. The Corporation was always ready, either by petitions, by addresses to the King, or by popular demonstrations, to keep up the excitement. The lord mayor and aldermen did not hesitate to oppose the House of Commons, to resist its orders, to imprison its messengers, and generally to defy its authority. Behind the whole of this agitation, exciting its spirit and directing its movements, was the indefatigable Wilkes. The question with regard to the law of libel and the rights of juries was settled in the law courts; but with respect to the disqualification of members, and the publishing of reports, the nature of the triumph itself was plainly indicative of the means by which it had really been gained. Chatham and Burke, and other great Parliamentary leaders, had thundered against the disqualification of Wilkes, and against the exclusion of reporters and the imprisonment of printers. But they had protested against other things, which either went on all the same under the protection of great ministerial majorities or were settled by formal votes in Parliament. In these two cases there was no victory gained in divisions. Wilkes took his seat, and the debates were reported, not because the opposition obtained a majority, but because neither ministers nor Parliament could resist the outside opinion which found expression in the House of Commons, through the small group of men who worked in the city with Wilkes, and in the

Lords through Chatham and his immediate friends, who would own no allegiance to the Whigs. It was the early working of a spirit of devotion to the popular cause, and of independence of old Parliamentary traditions, which ultimately developed itself into the form of a new party.

The same observations apply exactly to the movements for Parliamentary reform which began during this period. Here, indeed, the political weakness of the Whigs was most manifest. Burke and many of the Rockinghamites, who were firm on the other questions which have been under consideration, were, as we have before seen, opposed to any constitutional change. On the other hand, the Duke of Richmond advocated universal suffrage and annual Parliaments. Chatham himself was more undecided on this than on any other great subject with which he had to deal ; but through all his irresolution as to details, he was always ready to make some change which should give more definite and powerful expression to the honest public opinion of the country. His favourite plan—and one which he actually submitted to Parliament—was to give a larger share of representation to the counties, those being the constituencies in which he thought bribery, intimidation, and other forms of corruption had least influence. As to the shortening of the duration of Parliaments, he wavered from time to time, but his latest opinion seems to have been in favour of such a proposal as tended to make members more alive to their responsibilities towards their constituents. There was, however, a fixed and growing determination to agitate for reform on the part of the city men, and of some other earnest members of the Commons. And here it was early felt that if any advance was to be made, it must be the result of the efforts not of the people who owned or worked or represented the corrupt and limited existing constituencies, but either of those who were returned by the independent counties or cities, or of people and places who were excluded from all share in elective privileges. It was this feeling that led to the formation of associations and the holding of public meetings for discussing

political questions, which Mr. Herbert Spencer and his *col-laborateurs* hold to be one of the distinguishing features of the period 1768–70.*

In the House of Commons, Alderman Sawbridge began the system of annual motions on popular subjects, by moving every year, from 1771 to 1778, for leave to bring in a bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments; and in 1776 Wilkes asked leave to introduce a measure, by which he proposed to increase the number of representatives for the metropolis, the counties of Middlesex and York, and other populous counties, and to give members to the great trading and manufacturing towns, such as Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, and Leeds. The demand for reform was largely based on the corrupt power of the Crown in Parliament, and attempts were made to remedy the evil by the disqualification of placemen and officers in the public departments. It was on this point of endeavouring to purify the existing institutions rather than to re-construct them, that Burke separated himself from the reformers. Throughout the country, however, reform became a popular cry, and the large counties joined the city in active agitation for its adoption. This system of combined public and Parliamentary action was still further developed in the next following period, and it was then supported by a man who, from the splendour of his abilities as well as for his ardour on behalf of liberty, was worthy to take the place which Chatham was so soon to vacate. Charles James Fox, who was for a few years a member of Lord North's administration, and in that capacity opposed some of the earlier efforts to obtain reforms, left the Tory party in 1774, and soon became the great Liberal champion.

During the period which has now been under review, we can clearly trace the influence of principles which the King and the Tories hated, and which the official leaders of the Whigs could not accept; and we can see also the action of men who either, like Chatham, refused to be bound by party traditions, or, like Wilkes, were regarded as political incen-

* "Descriptive Sociology—England," table v., and notes thereon.

diaries. This position was recognized and acknowledged by Chatham himself in the often-quoted letter to Calcraft, in which, speaking of Lord Rockingham and his friends, he says, "The Marquis is an honest and honourable man, but that 'Moderation ! moderation !' is the burden of the song among that body. For myself I am resolved to be in earnest for the public, and shall be a *scarecrow of violence* to the gentle warblers of the grove, the moderate Whigs and temperate statesmen." Not a bad foreshadowing this of the character which would be assumed by, or given to that Radical party, to the origin of which the great orator certainly contributed.

CHAPTER III.

FROM THE DEATH OF CHATHAM TO THE FIRST MINISTRY
OF HIS SON, WILLIAM PITT (1778—1784).

THE period to be dealt with in the present chapter is one full of interest to the political and social student. There was such fulness and activity of national life, such a wide diffusion of public spirit, such sympathy between the awakening energies of the people and the ablest and best of their leaders, as must have seemed most hopeful to those engaged in the work, and contrasts quite tragically with the gloomy close of the century, brought about by the influence of the French Revolution on English thought and feeling, and by the long and disastrous war to which it led. Nor was the time less important in view of the particular purpose of this inquiry. There were many signs which gave promise of the formation of a party in Parliament, answering to one actually existing in the country, which should have for its objects the promotion of the interests of the mass of the people rather than those of privileged persons and classes; and for its means such a diffusion of political power as would make popular legislation possible, and give it stability when obtained. In speaking of such a possible conflict of interests, it must not be assumed that there was even at that time any considerable number of persons who consciously and deliberately subordinated the welfare of the community generally, to that of the particular rank or class to which they belonged. A government so selfish in intention could not have been maintained; but there were political theories and fictions, adhesion to which produced

the same effect which would have resulted from the avowed sanctity of individual and sectional interests. There was, in the first place, an abstraction called the nation, which was separated, in the minds of the rulers, from the people of whom it consisted, and tended more and more to mean the particular classes who, by birth or wealth, by aristocratic connections or court influence, were brought into immediate contact with the Government. The men in office then could aim at advantages to the nation, in the way of military glory, territorial additions, or international influence, without counting the cost in loss and want and misery to the people who found the taxes and filled the armies. To the same officials the security of the nation meant the stability of the existing form of government, and any extension of popular power seemed to threaten revolution and national disaster. Therefore, in order to preserve the nation, the people were to be kept in subjection, and even in ignorance; and men so unlike in character and ability as Windham and Eldon, combined to resist and defeat the first attempt to establish by law a system of popular education. It will be seen how the effect of the French Revolution was to increase and to extend these feelings, and to put back for an indefinite time the attempts which were being made on behalf of social progress and constitutional reform.

This, it may be said, was the Tory idea of national policy. In its best aspect, it may be stated as the government of the people, *for* the nation by prerogative. The Whig view was different in theory, but not so much unlike in practice. It recognized, indeed, the happiness and welfare of the people as the direct objects at which governments should aim, but it refused to give to the people any active share in the work of their own improvement and progress. Whilst, therefore, it often appealed successfully to outbursts of public opinion on behalf of particular measures, it refused to place any permanent constitutional power in the hands of the people. The Whig theory was the government of the people, *for* the people *by* existing privileged

classes, that was practically, by the aristocracy. We now have evidence of the more definite formation, within the bounds of what we call Liberalism, of a party the individual members of which would have called themselves Whigs, and are some of them still regarded as characteristic leaders of that body, but who aimed at objects and would have adopted means which were distinctly beyond the Whig programme. Even now there was no conscious attempt to form a new party ; the old lines were followed. The Radicals supported and often were members of Whig cabinets, only they desired that the party should travel quicker and further in the direction of democratic reform. Those who were most impressed with the evils which existed, the waste of the national resources, the corruption and jobbery in all departments of the public service, the pressure of taxation, the reckless conduct of the war, the repression of all attempts to improve the moral and intellectual condition of the people, were the most convinced that no essential change could be effected whilst the whole power of government remained in the hands of a limited class, to every member of which a share in the spoils of corruption seemed within reach. But this consciousness did not, in a great part of their political life, separate many of the men who held it from their colleagues in the Whig ranks. Fox, who looked to reform as the instrument by which permanent improvement was to be gained, was the colleague in office and the friend in council of Burke, who wanted to abolish jobbery without extending the popular power in the Constitution. Yet the views of the reformers gradually became distinctive, and there was a growing tendency in those who held them to associate and work together. That this association was only incidental to, and not a systematic part of, the political life of the more important men led to noteworthy results. What organization existed was loose, inefficient, and easily broken, so that its members were not influenced by it in joining or forming ministries, or in taking any other step affecting practical Parliamentary work. Fox and Sheridan, for instance, at the time we are now

dealing with, were active members of an advanced political association ; but they joined the Rockingham ministry, broke off from it when, on the death of its chief, Shelburne became Premier, and coalesced with North, not only without any co-operation, but, so far as is known, without any consultation with their unofficial friends. The manner in which these first attempts at Radical organization were made, and the indefinite character of their influence, are illustrated by the history of perhaps the most important of them all, having regard to the number and the position of its originators and members. This was the body called first the "Westminster Committee of Correspondence," and afterwards the "Westminster Committee of Association." This committee was established on the 2nd of February, 1780, and it continued to exist until April, 1785. The minutes during that period are consecutive, although for a great part of the time the meetings were few and irregular.* The interest for us in the account of this committee arises from the fact that it contained a great number of members of both Houses of Parliament, and that it interested itself quite as much with the proceedings of Parliament as with outside agitation. It seems, indeed, to have been for some time the centre of deliberation of that section of the party which Macaulay calls the *Ultra Whigs*, and which he speaks of as one of the combinations with which the younger Pitt might have associated himself at the commencement of his career, and with which for a time he did work on behalf of Parliamentary reform.† The great Whig historian speaks of this section as distinguished from that with which Fox was connected, whereas the orator was quite as intimately associated with them as he was with the official Whigs, and was the chairman of the Westminster committee during the whole period of its existence, and presided at the majority of its meetings.

* These original minutes, which are in three volumes and are signed by the various chairmen—principally by C. J. Fox—are in the possession of Mr. Samuel Timmins, of Birmingham, who kindly lent them to me for perusal and extract.

† "Biography of William Pitt."

In 1779 meetings were held in various counties to petition, in the first place, for a reduction of expenditure and taxation, and the abolition of sinecure places, exorbitant emoluments of necessary offices, and pensions unmerited by public services, all of which had been, and were still, increasing to an alarming extent. To this claim for the redress of immediate grievances was added a demand for Parliamentary reform, but this at the outset held a quite secondary place in the thoughts of the promoters and the prayers of their petitions. The greatest of these meetings was held at York, on the 30th of December, 1779; and the example was followed in a very short time by the counties of Middlesex, Chester, Hants, Hertford, Sussex, Huntingdon, Surrey, Cumberland, Bedford, Essex, Gloucester, Somerset, Wilts, Dorset, Devon, Norfolk, Berks, Bucks, Nottingham, Kent, Northumberland, Suffolk, Hereford, Cambridge, and Derby. In February, 1780, the city of Westminster held its meeting for the same purpose, and formed the committee already referred to. Amongst the members then elected were the Duke of Portland, Lord Temple, Fox, Burke, Sheridan, Wilkes, Sawbridge, five Cavendishes, Barré, Beckford, Churchill, and James and Thomas Grenville. Here we find representatives of nearly all shades of Liberal opinion, and the number and representative character were further increased by subsequent additions, amongst others being the Dukes of Richmond and Devonshire, the Earl of Shelburne and Sir Cecil Wray. On the 20th of February, 1783, that is, three years after the formation of the committee, on a change of secretary a complete list of members was entered on the minutes, and it is important to know that it then contained sixteen peers and fifty-one members of the House of Commons, for this fact gives great significance to the resolutions passed and the policy advocated. At the first meeting of the committee, Fox was chosen permanent chairman, and a resolution was passed inviting the various Committees of Correspondence throughout the country to co-operate. This invitation was responded to by the associations of Yorkshire, Huntingdonshire, Gloucestershire,

Hampshire, Nottinghamshire, Middlesex, and London. The committee intended to act on Parliament and on the constituencies, and at its third meeting, held on the 23rd of February, it requested the chairman "To procure as correct a list as possible of the members of the House of Commons who voted for and against Lord North's amendment to Sir George Saville's motion for a full account of the pensions, which amounts to a direct refusal of one of the great objects of the petitions of the people, and that he do transmit the same to the different committees."

Thanks were also voted to Burke for his plan of economic reform, which he had introduced on the 11th of February, in the memorable speech which is said to have "placed him not merely in the first rank of orators, but also in the very first rank of practical statesmen." On the 1st of March two resolutions were adopted, one appointing three members to meet a deputation from the other committees, and another "recommending such members of this committee as are members of the House of Commons, to give the most diligent attendance to their duty on impending business." The attention of the committee had been given to financial and other business, but it began to be felt more and more not only that one of its main functions was to promote Parliamentary reform, but that this work was the one on which all the others really depended. At the meeting on the 15th of March it was resolved—"That by the resolution of the general meeting, directing this committee to prepare a plan of an association on legal and constitutional grounds to support the laudable reform and such other measures as may conduce to restore the freedom of Parliament, this committee conceive themselves bound to enter into the consideration of every question tending to establish the independency of Parliament on a solid and durable basis." Accordingly, a sub-committee was appointed to inquire into the state of the representation of the country, and to report. Of this sub-committee Sheridan was appointed chairman, and its report, presented on the 20th of March, is signed by him in the minute-book. It defends annual Par-

liaments as constitutional, and as having been illegally altered ; states that by the statute 8 Henry VI. the Parliament then elected by the commonalty at large, passed an Act to disfranchise the greater part of the constituents by establishing the forty-shillings qualification ; and then refers at length to the decay of old boroughs, the representation of which is controlled corruptly either by the Crown or by hereditary owners, whereas new and large communities had grown up which are entirely unrepresented ; and it ends by the declaration that, whether as regards population or property, the representation is essentially unequal. On the presentation of this report, it was resolved that annual Parliaments are the right of the people, and that “the present state of the representation is inadequate to the object, and a departure from the first principles of the Constitution.” At a meeting on the 22nd of March, with Fox in the chair, and Burke, Sheridan, and Beckford present, we come upon the first reference to the ballot in a resolution—“That the obtaining of a law for taking the suffrages of the people in such a mode as to prevent both expense in elections and the operation of undue influence therein, is necessary towards the freedom of Parliament.”

A change was now made in the form of the committee. On the 3rd of April a sub-committee, consisting of Fox, Sheridan, and Colonel Fitzpatrick, was instructed to draw up a plan of an association, to be submitted to a general meeting called by advertisement, addressed to “the nobility, gentry, clergy, electors, and other inhabitants paying taxes to Government, resident in the city and liberty of Westminster.” At the public meeting the plan of association was adopted ; the committee then became “the Committee of Association,” and Fox was again elected chairman. Contact with popular feeling seems to have strengthened the tone of the committee, and enlisted its energies more definitely on behalf of Parliamentary reform ; for a sub-committee was appointed, which reported to a meeting on the 27th of June. The report, which was submitted by Mr. Brand Hollis, was long, elaborate,

and rhetorical, but it concluded with a definite scheme, as comprehensive and as thorough-going as any which has been put forward by the most advanced Radicals at any time. It included the well-known "five points" of the Chartists,* and proposed a plan of electoral divisions similar to that recently proposed by the Rev. Mr. Fowle,† and which seems to possess the merits of equalizing the voting power, whilst recognizing the local associations of the counties which have existed from the very commencement of our Parliamentary system. There were sixteen recommendations, which were to the following effect :—

I. Each county to be divided into as many districts as it is entitled to elect representatives, each district choosing one representative.

(The number of members for each county was set out, but was to be subject to periodical revision according to the relative increase of population. *See V.*)

II. Each district as far as possible to contain an equal number of males ; the name of the district being taken from the parish containing the greatest number of electors.

III. Annual Parliaments to be elected on the first Tuesday in July each year, the election to commence between eight and eleven, and close before sunset of the same day.

IV. All male inhabitants of this country (aliens, minors, criminals, and insane persons excepted) to vote.

V. Makes first allotment of members to counties,—in all 513.

VI. Regulation as to register.

VII. Grand inquest in each county to allot members to districts.

VIII. Election to take place in principal town or village of district.

* These were universal suffrage, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, payment of members, abolition of property qualification.

† *Fortnightly Review* for October, 1880.

- IX. Votes to be taken by ballot.
- X. Churchwardens to declare poll to sheriff of county, who returns writ.
- XI. The annual session of Parliament to commence on the first Tuesday in November.
- XII. Session to end in April, or, if necessary, may be continued by Crown to first Tuesday in July.
- XIII. Declaration by members.
- XIV. All members to be paid.
- XV. All election causes to be decided by jury before judges of assize.
- XVI. Every person competent to vote to be eligible for election.

This very pronounced scheme, having been considered, was, at a meeting on the 10th of July, ordered to be printed and sent to all the committees of counties, cities, and boroughs. It did not form the basis of any prolonged agitation, and was not, indeed, looked upon as the definite reform programme of the committee ; for on the 3rd of November Sir George Saville was thanked for a declaration about Parliamentary reform, and requested to prepare a scheme and submit it to Parliament, and some months afterwards the Duke of Richmond was asked to publish his bill for universal suffrage and annual Parliaments. The remarkable thing is that proposals so extreme should have been accepted at all, and without opposition, by a committee of which Burke, Shelburne, and Townshend, as well as Wilkes, Sawbridge, and Beckford, were members.

At this time, however, the movement for reform, although rapidly coming to the front, was regarded rather as the subject of outside agitation, to be supported, indeed, by declaratory resolutions in both Houses, than as the immediate practical work of the Liberals in Parliament. The most pressing business was to bring the fatal war with America to a close ; and that which seemed to offer the best prospect of useful result was the effort in favour of financial and economic

reform, which, especially after the success of Dunning and the splendid advocacy of Burke, was brought well within the range of practical politics. During this year, 1780, the Liberal members at once informed the committee, and received from it encouragement and support on both these subjects. At the meeting on the 3rd of November, at which Fox was in the chair, a resolution was passed against the continuance of the American war, as "if it could possibly be attended with success it would not only be destructive of the Liberties of England; but in the highest degree injurious to the general interests of mankind." On the 30th of the same month, Fox again presiding, the thanks of the committee were voted to "Mr. Wilkes and such other friends to public liberty as opposed the vote of thanks to General Clinton and Lord Cornwallis on Monday last, on the ground that success in the American war would be the ruin of the liberties both of America and England."

At the close of this year the proceedings give us an illustration of the feelings, not only of confidence but of affection, with which Fox was regarded by his associates and colleagues. On the 10th of November, John Churchill in the chair, thanks were given to Fox for his conduct in the House, accompanied by a declaration that his honesty and boldness may make him "the object of such attacks as he has already received;" and the inhabitants of Westminster were invited to do their best "to preserve to the great body of citizens by whom he has been elected, and to his country, the benefit of his services and the inviolable security of his person." On the 14th of December, when Colonel Fitzpatrick was in the chair, it was resolved to carry Fox at the election without any charge whatever to the candidate.

In the following year, 1781, the committee continued its outside agitation and its influence with the popular Liberals in the House. On the 23rd of January, Fox, the Earl of Effingham, Sheridan, General Burgoyne, W. Wyndham, W. Scott, and John Churchill were appointed delegates to attend in London or Westminster, to communicate with the

delegates of other petitioning associated bodies on the means of carrying into effect the objects of their petition. At the next meeting instructions were given to the delegates that their objects should be to obtain—

1. Economic reform and regulations for reducing the unconstitutional influence of the Crown.

2. More equal and fair representation by adding one hundred additional members, to be chosen in due proportion in the different counties and principal cities.

3. Shortening the duration of Parliament.

The meetings of these delegates attracted considerable attention, and were regarded by Government and its supporters as dangerous, if not illegal. Although they petitioned Parliament in their individual and not their representative capacity, their proceedings were objected to, and at a meeting of the committee on the 4th of April, a formal declaration was made of the right to meet, associate, and correspond. In this year, although it was not the most active, the committee continued its work on behalf of economic reform and its protest against the American war. On the 8th of December a petition to the King was prepared, which, after denouncing the war, ended thus: "We therefore humbly implore your Majesty that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to dismiss from your presence and councils all advisers, *both public and private*, of the measures we lament, as a pledge to the world of your Majesty's fixed determination to abandon a system incompatible with the interests of your crown and the happiness of your people." This petition was submitted to and approved by a public meeting, and Fox was requested to present it.

On the 9th of February a resolution was passed, calling on all members of the committee who were members of Parliament, to support Burke's motion for economical reform; and a similar appeal was made on the 27th of March on behalf of Dunning's motion for reforming abuses in the expenditure of public money and for reducing the influence of the Crown.

The beginning of the year 1782 was both the most active and the most interesting period in the history of the com-

mittee, because the political events of that time were of the greatest national importance, and they were affected mainly by the influence and energy of men who found in the committee their point of contact with the people. But there is another matter of great personal as well as historic interest, illustrated by the minutes of the transactions of these few but eventful months, that is, the relation between Pitt and those whom Macaulay calls the "Ultra Whigs." During this period the North Ministry was destroyed ; the long determination of the King not to make peace with the colonists was broken down ; Fox and Sheridan, Shelburne and Burke, were in office under Rockingham ; and William Pitt had made it known that he did not intend to enter any Ministry in the formation of whose policy he had not a potent voice—and at that time Pitt was a sincere and earnest reformer. At the beginning of this year everybody knew that the end of the war and the end of North's Ministry would come together, and that both must come soon. On the 22nd of February General Conway moved a resolution in the House of Commons for ending the war, and it was lost only by one vote, the numbers being 193 to 194. This was a sign, and the reality followed closely. On the 27th Conway moved—"That the further prosecution of offensive hostilities for the purpose of reducing the revolted colonies to obedience by force, would weaken the efforts of Great Britain against her European enemies, increase the mutual enmity so fatal both to Great Britain and America, and, by preventing a happy reconciliation with that country, frustrate the desire expressed by his Majesty of restoring the blessings of peace and tranquillity." A motion made by ministers for adjournment was defeated by a majority of nineteen, and General Conway's resolution was carried without a division. So the long-lived and disastrous administration of Lord North received its fatal wound ; but yet it could not for some weeks be got decently buried out of sight. Confusion, irritation, and passion were displayed, not only in Parliament, but in all political quarters, and it was not until the 20th of March that North formally announced his resig-

nation. In the mean time, our Westminster committee had shared the common anxiety and activity. On the 4th of March, Earl Fitzwilliam being in the chair, it was resolved to thank the members who voted for General Conway's successful resolution. On the 26th of March, Churchill chairman, there was a promise to support those approved friends of the people who, "in this awful and discouraging crisis," will endeavour to rescue the country from "a general confusion which has been heaped together by the combined negligence, folly, and wickedness of the worst and most incapable ministers." Two days after this the announcement was made in Parliament of the arrangement for the new Ministry, in which the Marquis of Rockingham was Premier, Shelburne and Fox Secretaries of State, and Burke Paymaster. On the same day the committee resolved—"That the Right Hon. C. J. Fox, by his able, spirited, and finally successful opposition to an administration profligate beyond the example of former times, hath accomplished an essential part of the wishes of his constituents, and shewn himself worthy of their warmest approbation and support."

Although the defeat of North and the formation of the new Ministry had been hailed with satisfaction by all sections of the Liberals, it was soon seen—and this was the first experience of a system which in later times became only too common—that whilst the victory had been largely due to the enthusiasm of the reformers or Radicals, the policy of the administration, although Liberal, was to follow strict Whig lines. The conditions under which the Ministry was formed were announced as—(1) peace with America; (2) financial reform on Burke's plan; (3) the diminution of the influence of the Crown. Under the last article the bills for excluding contractors from seats in Parliament and disqualifying revenue officers from voting were included. There was nothing about constitutional reform, nor any proposal whereby Parliament should be made more directly representative of the people. The committee was not slow in recognizing and protesting against this omission, although its chairman (Fox) was one of the

chiefs of the Ministry. On the 19th of April it was resolved—“That this committee, sensible of the baneful influence from whence the late administration derived the power and support which enabled them to persist in measures to the utmost degree disgraceful and ruinous to the nation, do expect from the same spirit and constancy with which the public cause has been maintained against a Ministry existing by Parliamentary corruption, a full and permanent security against undue influence by the establishment of such constitutional reforms in the Commons House of Parliament as shall restore to it its purity, and cause it to be a real representative of the people.” At the same time, the necessity of continued outside agitation was proclaimed by an invitation to other committees of cities and counties “to correspond upon the proper means of encouraging and strengthening the expected movements of the Parliamentary friends of reformation by the authority of the collective body of the people.”

Nor was it without hope that this call for public support was made, for although the Ministry would not touch the question of reform, it was now taken up by one who, by his connections no less than his abilities, began to fill that position in politics which was destined to become so striking in importance and so tragical to himself and his country in result. William Pitt inherited much of the oratorical power, all the self-reliance, and at first something of the popular enthusiasm of his great father. On the 7th of May, in this year, he moved in the Commons for a committee to inquire into the state of the representation in Parliament, and to report to the House their observations thereon. His principal object was to abolish rotten boroughs, and establish equal representation. Although Fox was in the Ministry which refused to act in this direction, he supported Pitt's motion, as did also Sheridan and Sir George Saville. But Burke and Townshend opposed, and the dead weight of the Whig following was cast in the same scale, and Pitt was defeated, although by a majority of only twenty. The committee at once met. They thanked Fox for his support of the resolution, and resolved—“that Alderman Saw-

bridge, Sir Cecil Wray, Mr. Churchill, and Major Cartwright be deputed from this committee to the Hon. W. Pitt, to express to him our acknowledgment of his truly patriotic motion on the 7th inst., respecting the state of the representation of this country in Parliament, and our hopes that he will continue his exertions in support of a reform essentially necessary to the independence of Parliament and the liberty of the people." On the 23rd of May, 1782, the following letter from Pitt, addressed to Alderman Sawbridge, was received and entered on the minutes :—

"SIR,

"I am extremely sorry that I was not at home when you and the other gentlemen from the Westminster committee did me the honour to call. May I beg the favour of you to express that I am truly happy to find that the motion of Tuesday last has the approbation of such zealous friends to the public, and to assure the committee that my exertions shall never be wanting in support of a measure which I agree with them in thinking essentially necessary to the independence of Parliament and the liberty of the people.

"I have the honour to be, with great respect and esteem, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

"W. PITT."

The connection thus opened the committee were willing enough to continue and strengthen. During this same month of May, a vacancy in the representation of the city of Westminster was caused by Sir George Rodney being created a peer. Pitt was requested by the committee to stand, but at a meeting on the 3rd of June, Fox being in the chair, Churchill reported "that the Right Hon. William Pitt declines the honour of offering himself for this city;" and Sir Cecil Wray, who had been nominated at a public meeting, was accepted. Events soon occurred which not only prevented any joint action between Pitt and Fox, but broke the unity of the Whig party, and for a long time alienated from Fox the

sympathy and support of many of his old friends, and of a large part of that public opinion which had been his greatest strength. On the 1st of July the Marquis of Rockingham died. His was the only influence which could keep the two sections of the Cabinet united, and at his death the quarrel between Fox and Shelburne, which had long smouldered, burst into flame. Both these great men have been defended by friends and advocates for the part they took on this occasion. We have less to do with the causes of the dispute than with its results, which, as regarded the fortunes of Liberalism in Parliament and the country, were most disastrous. Burke and other old Whig leaders went with Fox, and it was soon seen that Shelburne could not form a Ministry from what was left of the old connection. When, however, the time came for the King to have any voice in the appointment of a Cabinet, Fox was certain to be excluded, and so Shelburne became Premier, and William Pitt was, at the age of twenty-three, made Chancellor of the Exchequer. It must be remembered, however, that the young minister was at that time a Whig in opinions, with even Radical tendencies, and was supposed especially to feel the desire which his father had always manifested, to give increased effect in Parliament to the popular will. His joining a Whig Ministry was therefore in itself no injury to the cause of Liberalism. The evil effects were subsequently developed. The first of these was the commencement of that separation between Pitt and Fox, which afterwards became so complete and so bitter; and this could not but have a bad effect on Pitt, if only because it kept him from the influence of that enthusiasm for the cause of freedom and popular progress which all contemporaries agree to have been almost irresistible by those who came into close and intimate relations with Fox. Another consequence was the beginning of that alliance between Pitt and the court party which was so soon to manifest itself in defiance of the precedents of Parliamentary rule, and that close personal devotion to the Sovereign to which Pitt often sacrificed not only his own wishes, but his opinion of what was right towards

the nation. The worst immediate effect of the triumph of Shelburne was that which it exercised upon Fox himself. For almost the only time in his life, he seems to have allowed the sense of his personal injuries, and the injustice with which he had been treated, to affect, if not to overcome, his devotion to his political principles. He formed that coalition with Lord North which indeed avenged his own wrongs and seated him in office in spite of King and court, but which damaged him irreparably in the opinion of his countrymen, and remains a blot upon a most illustrious career.

The effect of this strange alliance was not long in manifesting itself. The new Ministry was formed in July, 1782, and on the 20th of January, 1783, the preliminaries of peace, whereby the independence of the United States was recognized, were signed in Paris. On the 24th of the same month the conditions of the treaty were discussed, and the existence of the coalition for the first time made known to Parliament. Fox and North both attacked the provisions of the treaty, although neither then nor at any subsequent stage of the discussions did they endeavour to prevent the acceptance of the conditions to which the nation had, as they held, been improperly committed. As soon as the alliance was known, it was felt that the fate of the Ministry was sealed. There were regret and dismay in the minds of many Liberal leaders, and still stronger feelings among the majority of the people outside; but the bonds of the Parliamentary party were too strong to be broken, and the followers of Fox and those of North, who had so often waged bitter war with each other, now marched in an unbroken and irresistible phalanx to attack the government. On the 17th of February the Ministry were defeated in the Commons. On the 21st a like calamity befel them, and Shelburne resigned. Under ordinary circumstances this would have ended the matter, and the victorious opposition, commanding a strong Parliamentary majority, would have taken office. But the King was determined not to admit Fox to his council, if he could by any means prevent it; and in this determination he

found support in Pitt, who took the unprecedented course of remaining in office for no less than five weeks after the Cabinet had been virtually destroyed by the resignation of the Premier. The time thus gained was used by the King in making incessant efforts to construct an administration which should not include Fox. He wanted Pitt to form a Ministry; he vainly endeavoured to induce North to betray and desert his newly-made colleague. All, however, was in vain; North was faithful, and the majority unbreakable. A resolution was passed on the 24th of March, by the House of Commons, calling upon the King to form a Ministry. A similar resolution was proposed on the 31st, but was withdrawn on Pitt's announcement that he had resigned; and on the 2nd of April the Coalition Ministry was formed. Of this Cabinet the Duke of Portland was nominally the head, but the real power was divided between the two secretaries, Fox and North.

It was soon to be seen how little permanent strength could be possessed by a Ministry supported by a mechanical majority in the Commons, not united by any devotion to common principles, and not in harmony with public feeling in the country which could either impress the court or make effective an appeal to the nation. By these events both the possible arms of an actively Liberal party were disabled: Pitt by his alliance with the court and his obedience to the wishes of the King, and Fox by the alienation from him of popular sympathy and affection. As regards the last-named consequence, the proceedings of the Westminster committee form an illustration. During the early period of its existence all the Parliamentary struggles of Fox had been marked by corresponding action on the part of the committee. There had been the most perfect unison between the active party in Parliament and public feeling outside. That was now changed. The committee still continued, and was, indeed, in its greatest numerical force, for it was in the month of February in this year (1783) that the long list of members before referred to was compiled. But there was no sympathy shown with Fox on the present occasion, and no desire

manifested to give him support. During the interregnum, when Fox was battling with the court, no meeting was held. After the formation of the Coalition Ministry, which was on the 2nd of April, a meeting took place on the 30th. Sir Cecil Wray, afterwards Fox's opponent in Westminster, was in the chair, but no notice was formally taken of the late ministerial crisis or its result. It was resolved that "this committee will continue to exert themselves to obtain a more equal representation of the people and a shorter duration of Parliament," and "that no minister will deserve the confidence and support of the people who will not sincerely promote a more equal Parliamentary representation." It was a curious commentary on this vote that in the following week, on the 7th of May, Pitt moved three resolutions on Parliamentary reform, and his motion was rejected by 293 to 149. This was in the House in which Fox was virtually the leader. He himself voted and spoke strongly for the motion, but his colleague North not only voted but spoke against the resolutions. In estimating the forces which were engaged in the vehement Parliamentary struggle between Pitt and the Coalition majority this fact must be borne in mind, that Pitt still acted as the advocate of the increase of popular privileges, and Fox had allied himself with the man and the party who were its most persistent and bitter opponents.

The struggle soon came. On the 11th of November the Indian bills were introduced. They were carried in the Commons; but the King was determined they should not pass, and, by a most unblushing violation of constitutional usage, his private opinion was employed to influence votes in the House of Lords, and the Ministry were defeated on the 15th of December by 87 to 79. On this occasion no time was allowed for consultations. On the 18th the King called upon the ministers to resign, and on the 19th Pitt became Premier. From that day until the 25th of March in the following year, a period of more than three months, there was one long passionate Parliamentary war. Pitt's position, holding office with a majority in the House of Commons constantly opposed

to him and calling by actual vote for his resignation, was clearly contrary not only to Parliamentary precedent, but to the plainest principles of the Constitution. Yet he held on without either speakers to help him or votes to support him, against the attacks of the ablest orators who have ever moved Parliament and the constant majorities which were behind them. The one thing which redeemed his conduct from the worst form of absolutism was the consciousness on both sides that an appeal to the country would result in the triumph of the Ministry. Here the opposition put themselves entirely in the wrong, denying by votes the undoubted right of the Crown to dissolve Parliament that the opinion of the constituencies might be ascertained. What that opinion would be was hardly a matter of doubt. In Westminster itself Fox had lost his hold on public feeling. The majority of the old committee was passively with him, but took no open steps in his behalf; and an active section, including Churchill and Sir Cecil Wray, was in violent antagonism. A public meeting had been held by the opposition, at which one hundred members were added to the committee, which by vote refused to receive them or have them admitted. On the 14th of February, 1784, whilst the Parliamentary war was raging, Fox's friends held a meeting at which he presided. There was violent disturbance, and a bag containing capsicum and euphorbium was thrown at Fox, who was in front of the hustings. A reward of two hundred guineas was offered by the committee to any one who would bring the perpetrator of this outrage to justice, but without effect. On the 5th of March, during the very height of the final struggle, the committee met, but made no reference to the crisis, and passed a general resolution in favour of reform and declaring its readiness to co-operate with other committees of counties and cities.

It was not until the contest was practically over that the committee spoke, and then it was in view of a dissolution rather than as taking part in the Parliamentary battle. On the 8th of March Fox in a division had a majority of only one

vote, and everybody knew that his case was lost. On the 19th, what was left of the committee met. There were but twenty-five members present, and there were two dissenting voices to the resolution—"that it is the opinion of this committee that the continuance of the present ministers in their offices after the House of Commons has declared by repeated resolutions that they do not possess the confidence of that House, and has addressed his Majesty for their removal, is contrary to the essential principles of the Constitution, injurious to the most valuable interests of the nation, and has a manifest tendency to prolong the unhappy distractions and divisions which prevail in this country." Even when the committee got to the real work for which it met, there was one dissentient voice to the resolution, that in the case of a dissolution the committee recommend the electors of Westminster to support Fox. Five days afterwards the dissolution came, the Coalitionists were routed all over the country—160 of them lost their seats, and gained the name of Fox's Martyrs—and their great leader himself narrowly escaped. He was opposed in Westminster by his former friend, Sir Cecil Wray, whom he only defeated by 235 votes; and there was a long and acrimonious struggle over a petition and scrutiny before he could sit for the city, a provisional Scottish seat having to be found for him in the mean time. Thus was broken for a time the connection between the people, needing as they did and longing for constitutional and practical reforms, and the only man who, alike by his abilities and his earnest convictions, was qualified to create and lead a party which should not immediately obtain—for that was impossible—but steadily prepare the way for the accomplishment of the national desire.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE FORMATION OF PITT'S FIRST ADMINISTRATION
TO THE ACT OF UNION WITH IRELAND (1784-1800).

THE accession of Pitt to the supreme power in 1784, marks an era in English political and party history rather from the possibilities which it involved, and which were developed by unforeseen circumstances, than from any actual change of policy which could be seen and appreciated by the people at the time. The minister, who ended as the most bitter opponent not only of popular rights, but even of freedom of thought and speech, began as a decided if not an enthusiastic Parliamentary reformer. He commenced his rule as a financial reformer, desirous above all things to reduce the national debt, which he ended by nearly quadrupling. There was at the outset, therefore, no reason why the Liberal feeling should have been alarmed at the power of the new minister. He had been in close correspondence, if not in alliance, with Wilkes, Sawbridge, Barré, and other Radicals; and his severance from Fox was naturally regarded with the less dislike because the coalition with North had for a time destroyed the popularity of the great orator. The true character and power of Fox were indeed hidden and obscured; but the events which kept him from power restored him to greatness. He was by instinct and sympathy the champion of causes which could not gain immediate victories, but which he watched and guarded and kept alive in times of darkness and danger. He had himself seen where his true place in political life was, and the work which he was best qualified to

perform. In 1778 he had written of himself: "People flatter me that I continue to gain rather than lose estimation as an orator; and I am so convinced this is all I shall gain (unless I choose to be one of the meanest of men), that I never think of any other object of ambition. I am certainly ambitious by nature; but I have, or think I have, totally subdued that passion. I have still as much vanity as ever, which is a happier passion by far, because great reputation I think I may acquire and keep; great situations I never can acquire, nor, if acquired, keep, without making sacrifices that I will never make." This statement is not only a wonderful specimen of self-appraisement, but it shows the insight of genius into the conditions of the time, and the political instruments with which he would have to work. None of the great objects on which the mind of Fox was set could be obtained with the then existing constitution of Parliament, and a change in that constitution seemed to become ever less and less possible. Both these facts were manifest in the case of Pitt when he was firmly seated in office.

The strength of his Ministry has been the subject of remark to all historians of the time. The Parliamentary majority was overwhelming; there was a fusion of both the old political parties, and an agreement of many and varying social interests in its favour. But the power of the Premier was not coincident with that of his administration. It is true that he had the appearance of almost despotic rule; but he had soon to learn that there were limitations to his authority, and these mark not only the boundaries of his personal influence, but those of possible political action. Pitt, when he first took office, was a Whig, alike by tradition, training, and sympathies. He had especially made himself the advocate of a reform more advanced than the old Whigs would accept: he had co-operated with Wilkes and Sawbridge, and obtained the thanks of the popular committees. This must be remembered in thinking of the manner in which his accession to office was accepted by the Liberal opinion of the country. He endeavoured to redeem the pledges which he had given, and

to justify the popular confidence. In less than a year after the meeting of the new Parliament—on the 18th of April, 1785—he introduced a motion for reform, which, on the 20th, was rejected by 248 votes to 174. He is described as the most determined minister who ever held power. He had almost the greatest majority behind him which has ever supported a cabinet ; and he is said to have been as powerful with the Crown as with the country. This was a subject which he had made especially his own, which he had introduced in more than one Parliament, and which he had declared to be “essentially necessary to the independence of Parliament and the liberty of the people.” Yet this omnipotent minister, this self-willed man, is defeated on his favourite subject by a majority of seventy-four ; and, what is more, sits down quietly under the blow, and never afterwards brings forward the matter in any shape. Well might the Westminster committee, at its last recorded meeting, resolve—“that this committee, impressed with the idea of the absolute necessity of a reform in the representation of the people in Parliament, feel the deepest concern in finding that the House of Commons has refused to give leave for bringing in a bill on the motion of the Right Hon. William Pitt, for amending such representation,” and then give up the hopeless struggle.

The condition of the nascent Radical party was now indeed depressed, if it could be said to have any definite active existence. Its spirit and principles lived in the hearts of the people without any sense of their immediate value, and in the minds of a few statesmen without power to give them practical expression. Another cause for this state of calm is to be found in the fact that there was at this time no pressure of unusual suffering in the country, and no exercise of despotic power on the part of the Government. Neither Pitt nor any one else would be allowed to interfere with the existing order of things ; but there was no influence strong enough to threaten the power of the King or the patronage of his friends. There was in the political world the sort of indifferentism which comes from the existence of a strong

Ministry professing generally popular opinions, but not striving in the least to carry them out. Such a period is within our memory during the supremacy of Lord Palmerston. The incessant growth of society, the increase of its wants, the development of its ideas, render the long continuance of such a state of affairs impossible ; and it may prelude, according to the conditions of the time, either some violent outbreak of a neglected and suffering people, or some manifestation of national energy in the direction of material and intellectual progress. What would have been the result in the present case if it had been left to English ideas and Englishmen to decide, we need not attempt to inquire, for we can never know ; for the terrible storm of the French Revolution burst over Europe, kindling hopes or arousing terrors before which the ordinary life of nations was bent and distorted, and their ordinary thoughts and traditions were swept away. The actual legislation which was effected or attempted between 1784 and 1790, gives us little clue to the natural tendencies of the time, outside the narrow range which King and court had marked. A good deal of the time of Parliament during this period was occupied by two subjects, one of which was discussed on broad national grounds, and the other on the narrowest lines of party, or even faction. The impeachment and trial of Warren Hastings lie beyond our boundaries, except so far as they inculcated the principle of the responsibility of rulers to the people through their representatives. In the discussions which arose on the first illness of George III., as to the terms upon which the regency was to be entrusted to the Prince of Wales, great principles were indeed introduced, but they were used for palpably party objects. The opposition, in order to increase the power of their friend and patron the Prince, maintained his hereditary right to the position. The Ministry, to whom his accession would mean dismissal, were all for constitutional limitations. The contest was creditable to neither party, and it was a good thing when it ended in the recovery of the King. For the rest, the business of the country went on quietly. Pitt tried

his nostrum of the sinking fund ; he negotiated a commercial treaty with France ; and he slightly re-arranged the incidence of taxation, as chancellors do when, with nothing serious on hand, they have to make some show of activity. The Whigs, on their side, had no power to do anything, and did not try to do much. A few mild efforts were indeed made, but they were not pushed on with the strength of the party, which, as we have seen before, were never united or hearty on the matter. One subject only of primary importance was debated with earnestness. The Test and Corporation Acts weighed heavily upon the Nonconformists, interfering with their rights and interests in every department of local work. It is in the nature of things that this class should belong to the advanced section of the Liberals, those who most strenuously maintain liberty against authority, and efforts in the direction of religious freedom will therefore be amongst the earliest signs of political activity on the part of the Radicals. The Parliament, however, which refused Pitt's request for reform was not likely to adopt any such proposition as that for the repeal of the Test Act, which, being moved on the 28th of March, 1787, was rejected by a majority of 176 to 98. It will be seen by these numbers that there was a substantial, although not powerful, Whig party. In fact, the Whigs had been strengthening their position in many respects. Fox was outgrowing the evil effects of the coalition—which Pitt lost no opportunity of calling to mind—and his oratory daily gained in brilliance and power. The friendship of the Prince of Wales was at once a source of Parliamentary strength to the party, and a guarantee to its more timid members that no very violent policy would be pursued.

Suddenly, however, the whole aspect of affairs and the constitution and relation of parties was to be changed. The proceedings in France during the years 1788 and 1789 were watched with the keenest interest here. By no class of statesmen were they at first regarded with fear or even with dislike. Pitt seemed to agree with Fox in the hope that the movement would lead to the establishment of a settled system of freedom

until then unknown in France. The violent proceedings of the end of the year 1789, the march upon Versailles, and the seizure of the King and the royal family, began to produce a feeling at first of disgust and then of horror in the minds of many Englishmen. Amongst the first to give expression to these sentiments was Burke. To his philosophic intellect it was clear that no permanent progress in liberty or in well-being could result from the unregulated violence of the city mobs who were making themselves masters of the destinies of France. He did not realize the fact that to break down the terrible despotism of Crown and nobles, by which the condition of the people of France had been made a perpetual slavery, and their lives one long and hopeless misery, a passionate national effort was necessary ; and if he did admit the fact, he would have still thought that the method of its overthrow was at once wicked and unwise. So he became the mouthpiece not only of the few who, like himself, loving practical liberty, loved also the ancient forms by which it had been limited and regulated, but of the more numerous class of all ranks to whom any change at all was hateful, and violent change appalling. It was in the beginning of the year 1790 that Burke's difference with his old friend Fox was first publicly manifested. In January of that year Fox praised the French army for its sympathy with the popular cause, and on the 9th of the following month he spoke in favour of the Revolution generally. Burke immediately replied, and denounced the Revolution in the most bitter and contemptuous terms. No open breach occurred at that time, but it was felt to be inevitable, and every day saw an increase of the number of Whigs who were prepared to go with Burke. On the 4th of March an application was made by Mr. Flood to bring in a bill for Parliamentary reform. Pitt strongly opposed it, although he admitted that it resembled the scheme which he had himself once introduced. The old argument of inopportuneness was used, and Burke, Wilberforce, Grenville, Windham, and Powys having spoken against it, and Fox in support, it was withdrawn without a division.

No improvement in English institutions was to be possible for many a dreary year.

The crisis soon came. Its phases were marked chiefly by the relations between Fox and Burke. In March, 1791, the "Reflections on the French Revolution" were published. On the 15th of April, Fox made a speech, in concluding which he said, with regard to the change of system that had taken place in the French constitution, there were different opinions entertained by different men; he for one admired the new constitution, considered altogether, as the most glorious fabric ever raised by human integrity since the creation of man. He thought it superlatively good, because it aimed at making those who were subject to it happy. Burke at once rose to reply to this challenge; but it was late at night, there were interruptions and confusion, and he sat down. Attempts were made by the Duke of Portland—the acknowledged chief of the Whigs—and others to heal the breach; but as they all involved the relinquishment by Burke of the right of expressing his opinions freely in the House, they came to nothing. On the 6th of May came the celebrated debate in which Burke lamented the loss of friendship made inevitable by his position with regard to the Revolution; and when Fox said that there was, that there could be, no loss of friendship between them, he replied, "Yes, there was. He knew the price of his conduct; he had done his duty at the price of his friend—their friendship was at an end." Burke was right. The friendship between the two statesmen had been one founded on and sustained by agreement in principles and devotion to a common cause. To both of them politics was the very breath of life, the main subject of their thought, the one end of their actions. Private friendship could not survive the severance of the ties that made it valuable, and the severance was complete. It was not merely the cessation of agreement; it was active antagonism. The causes which led to this separation were producing similar results throughout the whole social and political life of England. Sir Erskine May does not exaggerate the case when he says, "Society

was becoming separated into two opposite camps—the friends and the foes of democracy.”* The fear, and, it may be added, the misapprehension of the designs of what he calls the democrats, are reflected, indeed, in Sir Erskine’s own views as he describes the break-up of the Whig party. “When Mr. Grey gave notice of his motion for reform, the tone of the debate disclosed the revulsion of feeling that was arising against popular questions and the widening schism of the Whig party. While some of its members were not diverted from their purpose by the contact of democracy, others were repelled by it even from their traditional love of liberty.” Again, after speaking of the failure of the attempt to reconcile Pitt and Fox, he goes on to say, “But Mr. Fox, in opposition, was encouraged to coquet with democracy, and proclaim out of season the sovereignty of the people, while the alarmist section of the Whigs were naturally drawn closer to Mr. Pitt.”† This way of speaking about democracy as something terrible with which the Radicals were prepared to coquet—it being too fearful even for them to acknowledge openly—has been the fashion with the milder class of Liberals and with all Tories, from the days of Sidmouth down to the time when the late Lord Derby declared it was his mission “to stem the tide of democracy,” just before he passed the Reform Act of 1868, which gave to the people the most direct influence in the government of the country. But instead of being frightened by names, it is well to try and understand exactly what they mean. This is especially desirable in political discussions, where opponents are apt to pelt each other with epithets without stopping to define, much less to justify them. If by democracy is meant a desire to suddenly alter the form and substance of government; to abolish in politics the influence of social and intellectual gradations; to ignore the result of national character and traditions, and begin with an old race in an old land an entirely new system, as the French were doing when Burke

* “Constitutional History of England,” first edit. vol. ii. p. 30.

† Ibid., p. 38.

was so angry with them—then there has never been in the English Parliament a democratic party. But if by a democrat we mean a person who wishes to extend the principle of self-government among the people; to give them a more direct constitutional influence, as well as to recognize in their independence, progress, and welfare the true end of government;—then every Liberal must of necessity be a democrat, and the Radical especially may accept the name. What may be the effect upon the social future of the continual increase of popular power, it may not be possible to predict. Philosophers have drawn conflicting pictures of that future; for us it is enough to trust that, if it is the result not of violent artificial change, but of natural growth and development, we may, whilst doing the duty which lies nearest to us, possess our souls in patience. It was different, however, at the time when Burke and Fox were separated. Then efforts were being made in Europe to overthrow established institutions by violence, which, however well deserved, seemed incapable of replacing the forms it destroyed by others suited for the permanent service of society. It was indeed a great thing that Fox and the remnant of the Whigs—the Radicals they may well be called—who adhered to him in spite of the outcry which was being raised, had faith enough in their principles, and belief enough in the character and *morale* of their countrymen, to keep true to their old professions, and still to advocate the cause of reform. They are to be judged not as politicians desirous of undertaking the actual conduct of affairs, but as men recognizing great principles, and willing to abandon present power for their sake.

It was here that Fox and the Radicals were brought into contact with Burke's fundamental principle of civil government, its authority, and its function. His desire to separate the experimental and practical from the abstract in the theory of government, and expediency from legality in its practice, are well described by Mr. Pollock as the essence of his contribution to the theory of politics.* It is to be noticed that

* "The History of the Science of Politics," *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1882.

the actual and the expedient meant the conditions of the Constitution as he found them existing in his own time. They were the result of the endeavour of past generations to bring those conditions into harmony either with ideas of right or with the changing requirements of a society in which new interests were arising and new powers were being exerted. The Constitution, the form of government which Burke was willing to accept, was the result of constant and continuous growth and change. But he seemed desirous, and his theory involves the necessity, of arresting this process of development. The wisely expedient thing is to be careful that alteration is not mere arbitrary change, but the consequence of natural growth. But Burke, as we have seen, opposed every suggestion of constitutional reform. The necessity of some reform was accepted by almost every other great practical statesman of his time. Chatham, and his son William Pitt, Richmond, Shelburne, Portland, Fox, had all recognized the fact that some modification of the representative system was essential, in order to make it consistent with the social and political necessities of the time. Burke resisted every one of these attempts. What he was willing and indeed anxious to do, was to remove abuses of the system. He would clean and oil the machinery, but would not have it altered. And if the instrument of government were indeed a machine, and not a living organism, he might have been right. It was arguable that this machine had been perfected, and did not admit of improvement. But if it is permissible to regard the form of a constitution apart from the feelings, the traditions, the sympathy, and the wishes of a people, we should have to go further than Burke, and to admit that at any given time in any nation the actual state of things would be practically unchangeable. It would be for the administrators of the day to be satisfied with it—as Burke was in the case of England—to settle the matter. Forms of government would be, as Pope said, indifferent :

“Whate’er is best administered is best.”

The whole case is changed if we take the other view, and

regard political institutions as a part of a living social organism. Inorganic machines may remain unchanged, but to a living organism change is a part of the law of its being. Either growth and development or decay and disintegration are, and always must be, going on. It is the test of the wisdom and sagacity of statesmen, that they shall know how little or how much change is desirable or inevitable.

The Radicals were acting in obedience to a sound political law—and that none the less although they did not understand its origin and basis—in declaring that some constitutional change was necessary alike to comply with the wishes and requirements of the people, and to improve the working of the practical government of the country. That their proposals were defeated and the natural growth checked, does not invalidate this interpretation of the law. The natural growth of a child or of a limb may be impeded and distorted by artificial bandages, but it is at the cost of present suffering and permanent weakness. The greatness of the suffering which came upon England because its political institutions were not allowed to represent its varying interests and reflect its growing spirit and intelligence, the history of the country from the outbreak of the French war to the death of Castlereagh sufficiently demonstrates. Pitt's own career is a sort of illustration in little of the theory that has been discussed. When he ceased to be progressive, he became positively reactionary ; dropping reform, he took up restriction of personal liberty and freedom of expression, and employed the constitutional forms, into which he ceased to want to infuse new life, as instruments for the exercise of the most arbitrary rule.

There was no possibility of either healing over or concealing the differences in the Whig camp. Burke's statement as to the end of the friendship betwixt himself and Fox, was made on the 6th of May, 1791. On the 11th the final debate took place, in which Burke, whilst declaring that sentence of banishment from his party had been pronounced against him, vindicated his position and accepted the decree of severance

from the men who continued to reprobate the principles which he had enunciated in his book on the Revolution. The next day the *Morning Chronicle*, the recognized organ of the Whigs, published what Burke called the “definitive sentence,” in the following terms:—“The great and firm body of the Whigs of England, true to their principles, have decided on the dispute between Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke; and the former is declared to have maintained the pure doctrines by which they are bound together, and upon which they have invariably acted. The consequence is that Mr. Burke retires from Parliament.”* It was, however, one thing for the formal leaders of the Whigs to take this position, and another to carry with them the bulk of their followers. On all questions but one, which affected constitutional changes or any advancement of popular liberties, the Ministry from this time forward were strengthened by Whig votes. The one subject on which Fox was able to accomplish a work of permanent value was in the case of an amendment, or rather a clearer definition, of the law relating to the power of juries in libel cases. The measure, which asserts the right of a jury to decide both as to facts and law in such trials, was introduced by Fox on the 20th of May, 1791, and carried through the Commons, but was lost in the Lords. Brought forward again in the next year it became law, having been supported by Pitt. With this exception, Fox and his immediate colleagues found themselves deserted on all the questions to which they were most devoted. Many, indeed, of the old leaders accompanied or followed Burke in his secession. The consequences to the power of what remained of the party showed themselves with greater rapidity as the fierce drama of the French Revolution was unfolded. At the opening of the session of 1792, on the 31st of January, the address in the Commons, in reply to the speech from the throne, was carried by 209 to 85. During that year, occurred in Paris the attack on the Tuileries, the massacre of the guards, and the imprisonment and trial of the King; and when the next session met in

* Quoted in “Pictorial History of England” edition, 1857, vol. v. p. 813.

December, having been called much earlier than usual, Fox could only carry fifty votes with him, in opposing the address which virtually committed the country to war. The faithfulness of the few was severely tried in the course of the year. On the 21st of May, 1793, the Government issued a proclamation for preventing seditious meetings and writings. This proclamation was a direct attack upon the freedom of expression of public opinion, either in meetings or in the press. It warned the people against wicked and seditious writings, industriously dispersed amongst them, and commanded magistrates to discover the authors, printers, and promulgators of such writings, and sheriffs and others to prevent tumults and disorders. This was a direct incitement, or rather command, to the executive authorities throughout the country—for the most part responsible to no one but the Sovereign—to enter upon a system inquisitorial and arbitrary to the last degree. Yet when the House of Commons was asked to approve of the proclamation, the motion, although it was opposed by Fox, Grey, Whitbread, Russell, Hamilton, and others, was carried without a division.

Another measure of the growing weakness of the Whig party and the desertion of its members, is to be found in the proceedings having reference to religious liberty. In 1789 Mr. Beaufoy had brought in a bill to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, and secured 102 votes. In 1790 Fox made a similar attempt, and had 105 supporters; but when, on the 11th of May this year, he proposed a much less important concession to the Nonconformists, leaving the Test and Corporation Acts untouched, but repealing some old and very oppressive laws, only thirteen members of his old party would go with him. Even this number was soon further reduced. The proclamation against seditious writing and meetings formed one occasion for desertion; and the execution of Louis XVI., and the immediate declaration of war in the beginning of 1793, gave the final blow to the strength of a party to which no one could remain constant who was not either personally attached to the great leader, or so impressed

with faith in and devotion to the cause of popular liberty as to be able to look beyond the violence and confusion of the day, to a future in which great principles must triumph over temporary obstacles. The time was one, indeed, in which, on both sides, there were manifested the passion which is born of political excitement, and the violence which springs from terror. Timid people might be excused if, in such a mad world, they clung with desperation to existing authority as the only protection to society against revolution and anarchy. It was indeed a fire in which to try the temper of men and nations. The revolutionary clubs and associations of reformers were undistinguished by the opponents of all change, the voluntary suppressors of sedition, the friends of "Church and King," and by every class and grade of the official world. It was at this time—the end of 1792 and the beginning of 1793—that many of the old Whigs followed Burke in his hatred of France, his resistance to reform, and his support of the most coercive measures of the Government. Windham, who was one of the first to leave his old party, became one of the most bitter of their foes. Lord Loughborough, whom the Whigs had intended to make Lord Chancellor if the regency had not been arrested by the recovery of the King, took that office under Pitt, on the enforced retirement of Thurlow. The Duke of Portland himself joined the deserters from the army which he had nominally commanded, and he was accompanied or followed by Grenville, Lords Spencer, Sheffield, Carlisle, and Fitzwilliam, and Sir Gilbert Elliott.

There was, in fact, no party left in the House of Lords, and in the Commons from forty to fifty votes were the most that Fox and his friends could muster in a division. We have seen that only fifty members voted against the address to the Crown, on the opening of Parliament on the 13th of December, 1792 ; and when, on the 30th of January following, ministers announced the death of Louis, the withdrawal of ambassadors, and the virtual declaration of war with France, it was hopeless even to take a division. This position was fairly represented by the vote on Mr. Grey's motion in favour

of Parliamentary reform, based on a petition from residents in London. The debate was commenced on the 6th of May, 1793, and continued by adjournment on the following day. Pitt had now reached the level of the most bitter opponent of the reforms which he had previously advocated, and declared that he would rather abandon what he conceived to be the best plan of reform than risk the Constitution as it then existed. Fox spoke strongly in favour of the motion, which was rejected by 282 to 41. The forty-one members who voted with Grey may be taken as forming that Radical party which, deserted by their Whig colleagues, and subjected to abuse and misrepresentation, remained true through the darkest days to the cause of liberty.*

They were indeed dark days which were coming upon England, not only for the friends of reform and progress, but for the whole nation. With a war commenced without definite object, carried on without method and without success, and ending in a desperate struggle for life ; with the resources of the country lavished in subsidies to allies without energy or genius ; with trade paralyzed, and the people daily sinking lower in want and suffering ; with a Government driven by fear—that most cruel of all human passions—into a policy of continual coercion and repression, there seemed neither within nor without any possibility of present happiness,

* The following are the names of the forty-one. It must be remembered that Tierney, who was afterwards so energetic a member of the party, was not then in the House. He was elected in 1796.

Fox, Rt. Hon. C. J.	Weycombe, Lord	Shawe, W. C.
Grey, Charles	Vaughan, Ben.	Bouverie, E.
Taylor, M. A.	Birch, J. R.	Russell, Lord J.
Francis, P.	Millbank, R.	Taylor, Clement
Wharton, J.	Colhoun, W.	Jervis, Sir R.
Macleod, Col.	Sturt, C.	Whitmore, T.
Erskine, Hon. T.	Western, T. C.	Plumer, W.
Spencer, Lord R.	Church, J. B.	Harrison, John
Fitzpatric, Col.	Smith, W.	Featherstonaugh, Sir H.
Thompson, Thos.	Lambton, W. H.	Phillips, J. S.
Baker, W.	Jekyll, J.	Honeywood, T.
Curwen, J. C.	Lemon, Sir W.	
North, D.	St. John, H. A.	Sheridan, R. B. }
Courtenay, J.	Lee, Antoine W.	Whitbread, T. } <i>Tellers.</i>

any hope of future improvement. It was through this period of desolation and despair that the small band which rallied round Fox had to keep alive the fire which has happily never been quite extinguished in England. Engaged in such a struggle and against such odds, we must not too minutely examine by our present lights the prudence of every step they took, the wisdom of every word they uttered. It would have been strange indeed if, encountered by persecution and abuse, they had not replied in terms of passionate indignation ; nor is it wonderful that in circumstances so unprecedented they should, like their opponents, mistake the meaning of some of the actors and the tendency of some of the events which were convulsing the whole of Europe. If their belief in the leaders of the French Revolution, and their trust in Napoleon, were shattered by the mad violence of the terror and the heartless ambition of the Emperor, they were at least inspired by sympathy with the aspirations of nations, and not by devotion to the power of monarchs and the interests of privileged classes.

It is a striking illustration of the continuity of history, a proof that the events of the life of a nation are not mere isolated incidents, but are links in the long chain of growth and evolution, that even in these evil times there was no positive reaction so far as the forms and institutions of government were concerned. The powers of the law were stretched to the utmost for the suppression even of free thought and speech, but the law itself was not overstept. Even the last bulwark, that created by Fox's Libel Act, was respected, although by increasing the powers of juries it preserved the liberties, if not the lives, of many men obnoxious to the Government. The protection afforded by the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended more than once, and the country prisons were filled with suspects ; but the suspension was effected by the constitutional power of Parliament, and freedom of debate in the House of Commons itself was never denied. The old struggle on behalf of liberty against authority was indeed continued, but it was carried on under new forms. Authority spoke in

different tones, although its meaning was the same ; it had become less personal in its forms, and less distinct in its claims ; but this did not decrease the difficulty of its opponents. Instead of the acknowledged supremacy of the royal prerogative, there was the subtle and pervading influence of the court and courtiers ; instead of the infallible authority of the Church, there was the interest of churchmen always ready to do battle for their own order and its friends ; instead of the proud authority of the old aristocracy, there was the interest of the landowning class and the monied men who purchased rank by using their wealth for political purposes.

It is not to be assumed that the direct influence of king, noble, or priest was abolished ; only that it was modified. Whoever has read the "Life of the Prince Consort," written for and approved by the Queen, will know what authority the Crown still exercises over even the most powerful of responsible ministers. And in the time of George III. this authority was more direct. We have seen that his power was checked by the union of the Whig aristocracy with the popular leaders, but this opposition was in its turn undermined by the method adopted by George and his minister of filling the benches of the upper House with new men devoted to Church and King. This is described by Wingrove Cooke, who says "George III. had early set his heart upon changing the character of the upper House. If we scrutinize the votes of the Peers from the period of the revolution to the death of George II., we shall find a very great majority of the old English nobility to have been the advocates of Whig principles. The splendour of their name enabled them to espouse popular doctrines without fear of being herded with the ignorant demagogues of the day. The party creed was generally as hereditary as the family estates, and as these ancient titles were commonly created by writ, and consequently descended to heirs general, there appeared but little chance of the Whigs being extinguished in that House. As the tide of the royal favour gradually drifted away from Whiggism, he also saw the advantage of having a stable and indissoluble majority of his own party in the House

of Peers. He wisely divined that the surest way to accomplish this object was to fill the House with men whose descent was not such as to enable them to take liberties with their dignity ; who would vote popular doctrines vulgar, and think that their new nobility compelled them to be exclusive. George III. had kept the doors of the House of Peers cautiously shut against the Coalition, but he threw them wide open to Pitt. The change was to be effected, not by a sudden inundation, but by turning a streamlet into the House. Without shocking the ancient nobles, the aggregate of the Pitt peers soon became considerable. Within four years after he had assumed the government, Pitt could reckon forty-two of his own creations in that House." *

When this result was obtained, there was a union of the three elements of authority against any attempt to extend popular privileges. The battle had become not less social than political, and even if less personally dangerous, it was made more difficult by the number and variety of the forces. Sir Erskine May says, " There was a social ostracism of Liberal opinions, which continued far into the present century. It was not enough that every man who ventured to profess them should be debarred from ambition in public and professional life. He was also frowned upon and shunned in the social circle. It was whispered that he was not only a malcontent in politics, but a free-thinker or infidel in religion. Loud talkers at dinner-tables, emboldened by the zeal of the company, decried his opinions, his party, and his friends. If he kept his temper, he was supposed to be overcome in argument. If he lost it, his warmth was taken as evidence of the violence of his political sentiments." † Against such forces the mild Whigs did not attempt to fight ; indeed, by joining it they made the army of authority the stronger. From a Parliament elected by and representing narrow constituencies where such elements were predominant, there could be no hope of reform. It was more difficult to obtain it now than it would have

* " History of Parties," vol. iii. pp. 363, 364.

† " Constitutional History of England," pp. 11-36.

been before the power of the old Whigs was broken, and before the French Revolution had filled the minds of the people with doubt, and those of their rulers with terror. The very instrument by which alone a change could be effected was in the hands of a class to whom all change was hateful, and by whom it was held to be dangerous.

Such was the position in which the little band which followed Fox found themselves, and they maintained the struggle with wonderful courage. Their only hope was that they might create an effect upon public opinion, and it was inevitable that they should adopt a tone which the calmer members of their party have called violent and democratic. During the remainder of the year 1793 some further efforts were made to arrest the war, but they secured on divisions only between forty and fifty votes, and Parliament was prorogued in June. This year a young man entered Parliament who was destined to exercise an immense influence upon the position and power of parties in England, and to begin a new era in the foreign politics of his country. George Canning, who sat for the first time as member for Newport, in the Isle of Wight, began his career as an admirer and a supporter of Pitt, and he continued faithful for the remainder of the life of the great minister. He was from the beginning a bitter and unscrupulous opponent of Radicals and Radicalism, and attacked them alike with satire and with serious eloquence. Yet he lived to do more harm to Tories and Toryism than he was ever able to accomplish against the objects of his early hatred.

In the year 1794 there was little change in the real strength of parties in Parliament, and none in the policy of repression at home or in the feebleness and extravagance of the conduct of the war. The division in the Whig camp was completed, or rather publicly acknowledged, by the acceptance of office under Pitt by the Duke of Portland and Earls Fitzwilliam and Spencer, which took place in July. Windham had already gone over, led by his admiration for Burke. These accessions to the Government took place

whilst it was using its power in the most remorseless way for the purpose of preventing every expression and punishing every action on behalf of what were called "French principles," which included any word or thought in favour of liberty or reform. They joined the Ministry in the same year in which the prosecution of Muir, Palmer, and others, in Scotland resulted in trials which were a mockery of justice and sentences which were an outrage on mercy; in which attempts to punish Horne Tooke, Hardy, Thelwall, and others, in England failed only because of the firmness and honour of English juries; and in which, after that failure, the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and the liberty of the subject handed over to the tender mercies of ministers who did not hesitate to denounce in Parliament the men whom the juries had just acquitted.*

The Government grew stronger by its converts, and continued to use its strength without moderation. Early in 1795 Sheridan moved to repeal the Act suspending Habeas Corpus, but was defeated by 184 to 41; and motions against a continuance of the war met with a like fate. The distress which such a war so conducted was certain to cause began now to be felt, and when the King went to open Parliament on the 29th of October, he was mobbed by people, who cried out for cheaper bread and the dismissal of Pitt, and a shot was fired at his carriage. The Ministry had but one reply to its

* In the debates on the address, Windham spoke of Horne Tooke and others as no better than acquitted felons. On the 6th of October, 1794, the grand jury of Middlesex found true bills against Hardy, Horne Tooke, Thelwall, and nine others, for high treason. Hardy, who had been secretary to the Corresponding Society, and had written and published some very strong things, was first tried. There was a very full bench of judges, and Scott—afterwards Lord Eldon—opened the charge in a speech which lasted nine hours. After being carried on for eight days, the trial ended on the 5th of November, in a verdict of acquittal. As Hardy's was certainly the strongest case, there was not much chance of the conviction of the other prisoners. The Government, however, determined to persevere, and on the 17th of November Tooke was put upon his trial. He amused the public and irritated the prosecution by his wit, and on the 22nd he was acquitted. Thereon all the other cases were abandoned, except that of Thelwall; but, after a trial lasting over four days, he also was found not guilty. These trials are evidence at once of the malignity of the Ministry and the independence of English juries.

opponents in Parliament or the famishing people outside—more repression. So bills were brought in and carried to “provide for the safety and preservation of his Majesty’s person and Government against treasonable and seditious practices and attempts,” and “for the prevention of seditious meetings.” The causes of the troubles were dwelt upon by the opposition, and especially by Grey, who, on the 10th of March, 1796, on moving for a committee on the state of the nation, called attention to the fact that in three years the national debt had been increased by £77,000,000, whilst the total amount borrowed for the American war was only £63,000,000. The resolution was negatived by 207 to 45; and on the 19th of May Parliament was dissolved by a speech from the throne, which referred to the happy effects experienced from the provisions adopted for suppressing sedition and restraining the progress of principles subversive of all established government.

The new House of Commons, which met on the 6th of October, differed little in character from the last one. Whatever might be the feeling amongst the mass of the people, the classes who held possession of the electoral power were still filled with terror of French principles and hatred of French rulers. The opposition numbers were slightly increased, and additions were made to it of two members who were to be heard of afterwards, one as a solid and important leader, the other beginning as a declamatory agitator, and ending as a deserter from the Radical party. These were Mr. Tierney and Sir Francis Burdett. The test of party strength was applied on a motion by Fox, condemning the advance by ministers of £1,200,000 to the Emperor of Germany, on account of the war, without the consent of Parliament. To this resolution, which declared that by this act ministers had acted contrary to the trust reposed in them, and had violated the constitutional privileges of the House, an amendment was carried by 285 to 81. Some negotiations which had been opened having failed, the war was continued. Its effects upon the finances of the country were felt with

increasing weight, and early in 1797 cash payments were suspended, first by the Government, and afterwards by a bill which remained in operation until 1819. The year was in every way disastrous and gloomy. The expenditure on the war and the consequent burden of debt increased with terrible rapidity, and two mutinies broke out in the fleet. It was in the midst of these misfortunes—the second mutiny broke out on the 20th of May—that Mr. Grey, on the 26th of May, moved for a sweeping reform in Parliament. The time was not wisely chosen, the long existing fear of change was increased and rendered more acute by the mutiny, and yet he obtained ninety-three votes for his resolution, which was more than double the number he could rally six years before in the last Parliament. Yet in spite of this increase the outlook seemed so dark, the battle so hopeless, that Fox and many of his followers resolved to give up the struggle, and to cease to attend in the House. This secession lasted with more or less consistency until the end of 1800, and even then Fox himself did not return to regular attendance. The whole of the party did not join in this movement. Sheridan remained at his post, and even supported ministers in their action with regard to the mutineers—a course of conduct for which he was never entirely forgiven by his old friends. Tierney, too, continued his attendance, and, in the absence of Fox, soon came to take the lead of what Liberal forces were left. But the party was shattered and rendered useless by the secession, and ministers, no longer opposed even by the eloquence of their old enemies, were entirely unrestrained in their policy.

Secession such as this is a course which admits of no justification, more especially from a Liberal to whom the principles of representative government ought to be dear. It is conceivable that a man who obtains a seat, either by purchase or the exercise of hereditary or social influence, may come to look upon his office as a piece of property to be used or enjoyed for his personal ends only. Such a one might either attend or absent himself from the House, as suited his convenience, his interests, or his caprice. But a Radical must

regard the position conferred upon him by a constituency as a trust to be exercised for the good of the community, to be held only so long as the conditions can be honourably fulfilled. He cannot hold a commission and refuse to fight. It is always open to a member to decide whether or not he will continue to hold the trust; but so long as he holds it, he must perform the duties. When he can do this no longer, he must give way to one who will—otherwise he deprives his constituents of all representation. And abstention is as much a mistake in policy as it is a violation of principle. The work of the world will go on whether a particular set of men take a share in it or not. Neither the work nor the life of any man is so essential that the business of a nation can stop because he cries Hold! although it may take a somewhat different direction in consequence of his exertion. This was seen plainly enough in the present instance: the minister proposed his measures and his followers voted for them, irrespective of the fact that Fox was not there to criticize, and that the opposition votes numbered nineteen instead of ninety.

A worse time could not have been chosen for such an experiment than that which was actually selected. Not only did the war and the war expenditure go on without sufficient discussion, but a most important piece of internal legislation was commenced and completed during the absence of the Foxites. The union with Ireland was a work of the very greatest consequence to the future government of the country. Every detail of such an arrangement ought to have had the careful consideration of the party in Parliament, which represented the feelings of the popular or democratic section of the constituencies. Perhaps if Pitt had been met by such full discussions, the immediate consequences, as regards his own position, which followed the completion of the union might have been avoided. The great work, however, was accomplished without such criticism, and, it may be said, it was done in the absence of any Radical or Liberal party in the House. The Act of Union received the royal assent on the 2nd of July, 1800; and the Imperial Parliament, including,

in the House of Commons, the old members and one hundred Irish members, met on the 22nd of January, 1801, and with its meeting begins a new chapter not only in the history of the Radical party, but of the Parliamentary government of the nation.

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE ACT OF UNION TO THE DISMISSAL OF THE
GRENVILLE MINISTRY—DEATH OF PITT AND FOX
(1800–1807).

THE influence exercised on the policy and the parties in Parliament by the union with Ireland was from the first very great, and it has been growing rather than decreasing in importance to the present time. It arose from many circumstances, and manifested itself in various ways, all of them having a tendency to disintegrate the old party organizations, and to raise questions with which the old party traditions were unable to deal. The introduction of one hundred members, nearly one-fourth of the original number, and those men not only personally new to the House of Commons, but of another nationality, and with ideas and sympathies different to those of the British members, was in itself a sufficiently striking thing which could not but alter the previous balance of parties. But the personal element, however important, was of much less consequence as regards permanent effect upon the country than the new interests which Parliament was called upon to consider, and the new ideas and principles which it was compelled to discuss. Two subjects especially forced themselves upon public attention, one of which appealed to the deepest feelings, whilst the other seriously affected the material welfare of the Irish people. These were the religious and the agrarian questions, which, although seemingly separate, were in reality intimately connected, since the laws relating to the tenure of land,

like all other laws, had been framed with the view of preserving the ascendancy of the English pale and of the Protestant religion. It is true that with the carefully restricted franchise which then existed, from which the Celtic and the Catholic elements were as far as possible excluded, the members sent to Parliament represented mainly such sections of the community as were opposed to change, and were in harmony with the general policy of the Conservative government. Yet when Irish questions came up for discussion, it was found that they presented aspects to which the traditions and principles of English parties did not apply, and on no question did the new contingent naturally and thoroughly agree with the old political forces.

The consequence was what may be called an unstable equilibrium of parties, and uncertainty as to the line which ordinary politicians would take on any particular question. On Irish subjects, then, it happened that as the old party formularies could not be applied, the opinions, feelings, and wishes of the people had to be more and more considered, and Radical principles of government had, either consciously or unconsciously, to be adopted. Thus, both by the weakening and partial disintegration of the Tory and Whig parties and by the enforced introduction of popular ideas and tests, there were gradually established conditions favourable to the growth and power of Radicalism. The effect of these conditions upon the fate of English cabinets has been very remarkable. Four times since the union have Tory Ministries been either absolutely shattered or hopelessly weakened by their action on questions which were either entirely Irish or complicated by peculiar relation to Ireland, and more than once have Whig or Liberal governments suffered from the same causes. The first instance was the immediate result of the conditions under which the Act of Union was passed, Pitt himself resigning and breaking up his Cabinet because the King would not consent to Catholic emancipation. Twice afterwards did the same question destroy the solidarity and power of the Conservatives: once when the party leaders

would not join Canning in consequence of his views on the subject; and again when Wellington and Peel, having opposed Canning almost to the death, themselves accepted the responsibility of flying in the face of all their own antecedents and all the traditions and convictions of their party, and of passing the very Act which they had deserted their old colleague for promoting. Even on the business, which perhaps of all others has most vitally affected the material welfare and progress of the English people, the effect of Irish influence was felt. The repeal of the corn laws would probably have been a question of a very short time under any circumstances; but it was the occurrence of the Irish famine which hurried Sir Robert Peel to the determination to adopt a course which, whilst conferring untold benefits upon his country, broke up his party and closed his own official career. On the other side, divisions on an Irish Church measure destroyed the ministry of Grenville after the death of Fox, and fatally weakened that of Lord Grey in 1834, and the first direct blow given to Mr. Gladstone's first administration was given by its failure to deal with Irish university education. The consequences in ordinary times of the action of Irish representatives on the relative strength of English parties, especially after emancipation and reform had introduced new elements into the representation, will be manifested in the whole future course of our Parliamentary history.

When the Imperial Parliament first met, there was nothing to indicate that any great change would result from the introduction of the hundred Irish members, for, on Grey's moving an amendment to the address, he was defeated by 245 to 63, the same kind of division to which he had been used in the old English House. In the Ministry it was soon found that serious complications existed. Much has been written about the character of the pledge which Pitt gave, or authorized others to give in his name, as to the admission of Roman Catholics to Parliament as a condition of the vote of the Irish legislature for the Act of Union. The one thing certain is, that the minister felt himself bound in honour, whatever he

may have been in direct form, to carry out the promises which had been made. When, however, he opened the subject to the King, the resolute resistance of that monarch placed him in the most difficult position. So passionate was the King in his determination to resist what he held to be a violation of his coronation oath, that the very proposal brought on a return of his mental disease. That Pitt ought to have made himself acquainted with the view of the King before committing his administration absolutely to emancipation must be allowed, but he may be excused for not anticipating so decided an opposition. When he became aware of it the act was done, and there was no way of escape with honour, for to have obtained such a concession on conditions which he was unable to perform, could not but affect his character, not for personal veracity, but at least for responsible statesmanship.

The firstfruits of the union, as regards its effects on English parties, were not long in ripening. On the 31st of January, the same month in which the United Parliament first sat, Pitt wrote to the King, explaining that he felt that some measure of relief to Catholics was required by the State of Ireland, would be safe as regarded England, and was so imperative that he could not remain in office if it was not granted. George III., who had just before said, "I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure," replied to his minister's letter the day after it was sent. He hoped to retain Pitt in office, but could not even discuss any proposition to alter the existing constitution in Church and State. Further correspondence ended in the acceptance by the King of the resignation on the 5th of February, and Addington was entrusted with the formation of a new Ministry. The King's illness and other causes delayed the formal conclusion of the business, but on the 14th of March Pitt withdrew from office, and was accompanied in his retirement by Dundas, Spencer, Grenville, and Windham. This was an event most momentous in the history of English parties. It broke up one of the strongest Ministries which

have ever held power and, what was perhaps still more important, it dissolved the union between Pitt and Grenville, and the section of the Whigs which had followed the latter in his alliance with the late Premier.

This dissolution of the Ministry restored the possibility of solidarity to the Liberal party by reuniting Grenville and his friends to the section which had stood by Fox. On the other hand, it took from the Tory ranks all that had any semblance of Liberality. Pitt, even in the days when his hatred and dread of French principles urged him most strongly to a policy of repression and coercion, could not forget the love of liberty and the desire for reform which he inherited from his father and avowed in his own youth. He gave a proof of this by resigning, because he could not accomplish the act of justice to the Roman Catholics of Ireland to which he considered himself pledged. All that had been thoroughly oppressive, obscurantist, reactionary in the Government remained there unchecked and undiluted. Addington, Castlereagh, Eldon, the respectable but dull courtier, terrified at every popular movement; the friend and ally of despotism at home and abroad; the passionate, invincible enemy of change—these were the men who were now retained in office. The full effect of their policy was not yet to be felt, for whilst Pitt and Fox, Windham and Grenville were alive, complete power could not remain in the hands of men so inferior in political ability and with less hold upon the public feeling of the country. Their present tenure of office was but a prelude to the chapter of oppression and misery which they were destined to write in the history of their country. Evidence was soon given of their ideas of government. They took office in the middle of March, and before the prorogation on the 2nd of July, they had passed Acts for the suppression of rebellion in Ireland, the suspension of Habeas Corpus Acts in England and Ireland, for preventing seditious—that was all free public—meetings, and for indemnifying all persons concerned in securing, imprisoning, and detaining individuals under former suspensions of the Habeas Corpus Act.

It was a curious instance of the uncertainty of political affairs that this pre-eminently Tory Government should have had for its first—and, indeed, its only important—business, the negotiation of peace with France. Fox and his following of Ultra-Liberals had all along clamoured against the war, and had lost no opportunity of pressing for its termination; Grenville and the Whigs had divided their party in order to support Pitt in his warlike policy; and now a Ministry which was too Conservative for either Grenville or Pitt, had to bring the struggle to a close, not by the subjugation of France, not by a suppression of French principles, but by a recognition of, and by many concessions to, that very revolutionary Government against which all the monarchical powers of Europe had vainly directed their attacks. When the Treaty of Amiens was made with the first consul, it was not because he was thought to be what he afterwards proved, the worst enemy of republicanism. He was the bitter foe of England, but all parties in this country believed him to be the representative of the principles which the war had been intended to destroy. Pitt must have found some consolation for the loss of place and power in the fact that he had not to be the instrument through which the humiliation of treating with Napoleon had to be effected. Yet every one knew that the war could not be continued. France had defeated the combined power of Europe, leagued in the endeavour to check the Revolution and restore the Bourbons. She had placed at the head of her Government the commander who had been the instrument not only of her defence, but of her revenge. Grenville and a few of his friends remained on this point more Pittite than Pitt, more Tory than Addington, and would fain have continued the war rather than acknowledge the republic. But continuance was impossible, for we were left without allies and with resources that demanded rest. The national debt had been increased by £276,000,000, and there was no object which a prolongation of the contest could secure. These preliminaries were agreed to on the 1st of October, 1801, and the Peace of Amiens finally concluded on the 27th of March, 1802.

There were few who believed that peace would be permanent; but it was supported by Pitt and Fox, and Grenville and Windham could rally very little opposition in either House. Another member of the old opposition, Tierney, had for a time left the party and taken office under Addington. His secession, if it really amounted to that, was not of serious consequence at the time, and he rejoined his friends when, at a later date, they had to contend against the repression and tyranny which followed the final close of the great war.

There was as little belief in the stability of the new Ministry as in the permanence of the peace. Many people thought that Addington only held office to keep the place until his old friend and leader Pitt could consistently return. The Premier himself took a very different view of the position and of his own importance, and his opinion was strengthened by the terms of confidence and almost of affection which grew up between him and the King. So it fell out that the end of the peace came before that of the Government, but it was all the more strongly felt that the one event could but be a prelude to the other. In a time of peace Addington might manage to hold on to place with a friendly sovereign, a subservient Parliament, and with Pitt willing to stand on one side. With a great war raging, the conditions were entirely changed. Parliament, while still obedient, did not conceal its opinion as to the desirability of Pitt's return to office, and the great man himself no longer pretended to feel confidence in the ability of his successor. As for the King, he was constantly hovering between sanity and insanity, and his confused mind, played upon by the small tactics of Addington, was unable to understand the real necessities of the case. In this state of affairs, the position of the Liberal party became a matter of increasing importance. A complete estrangement between Addington and Pitt seemed likely to make an efficient Government impossible without an alliance by one of the rivals with some of the Whig leaders. The majority in the Commons might rather be called ministerial than Pittite, although a large part of it would gladly follow the old chief, if he were once more

in harmony with the King. Yet Addington had a considerable personal following, which, added to Pitt's position and indecision, was sufficient to give working power to the Government. The last-named element had to be balanced by some help, if not in numbers yet in ability and popular support, by an alliance with the Whigs. This was soon seen to be impossible. Grenville and Fox, although differing on the question of the war and on some other subjects, were agreed as to the necessity of Catholic emancipation. Grenville, indeed, seemed determined to adhere more resolutely than Pitt to the implied pledge which had been given to Ireland when the Act of Union was passed. On the 19th of February, it was reported that the two Whig leaders had united their forces, and that neither of them would enter the Ministry without the other.

This was equivalent to declaring that the new Ministry should be exclusively Tory, for George III. was determined not to admit Fox into his counsels, and Pitt himself was not earnest in the desire that he should, although he submitted the name with that of Grenville as desirable additions to the strength of the Government. The minister evidently expected that in the last resort Grenville would accept office without his great ally under the pressure of the times. He was bitterly pained and disappointed by the refusal, and declared he would teach that proud man that, in the service and confidence of the King, he could do without him, even if it should cost him his life. The last days of the Addington administration have no interest beyond this failure to form a coalition. Its death, indeed, was as undignified as its life. It had concluded a delusive peace, and recommenced a hopeless and disastrous war. There had been actual rebellion in Ireland, and an appearance of revolutionary feeling in England. Emmett in the one country and Colonel Despard in the other were executed. But the causes which led to disaffection in England, and the more desperate oppression which drove Ireland into chronic rebellion, were left untouched, left to fester unhealed and to break out into fresh social and political sores. And now the Ministry, strong in votes but feeble in

purpose, was kept in office by the help of a majority which had no faith in its efficiency, and longed to see it superseded by the man whose retirement had made its existence possible. The Whigs were powerless to shake the Government; it fell by the hands of its own friends. On the 10th of May, 1804, Pitt once more took the seals of office, and formed his second and last administration. The changes in the Ministry were neither numerous nor important. Cut off from the Whigs, the Premier was compelled to look to his old Tory friends and those of Addington for support. He was thus once more shut up within the narrowest range of policy. This had been rendered inevitable when he once more sacrificed his own convictions—this time on the Catholic question—to the prejudices and obstinacy of his sovereign. The most interesting of the new appointments were two minor ones. Canning was made treasurer of the navy, and Huskisson one of the secretaries to the treasury. These two men were hereafter to exercise an important influence upon the fortunes of their party, introducing ideas which were fatal to its unity, and opening the way for the introduction of Radical principles, which were opposed to the traditions of both the old schools of politicians. At present they were both, and Canning especially, moved by a strong personal devotion to the chief who had placed them in office. Windham did not rejoin the Government; he returned to opposition, strong in his adhesion to those opinions of hatred to France and the Revolution, and of dislike of constitutional changes at home, which he had imbibed from Burke and held with a sort of religious fervour, and which separated him, as it had done his great teacher, from sympathy with popular feeling. He remained a typical Whig, as distinguished from Liberals like Fox and Grey.

Although Pitt had been recalled to office because, in the opinion of people and Parliament, he was the only man capable of conducting the nation through the stormy and dangerous times which lay before it, his personal power was by no means so great as it had been during his first administration. No doubt his position on the Catholic question had

shaken the sympathy of the ultra-Protestants and Tories, as it had done that of the King, and both had been transferred in large measure to Addington. Whilst, therefore, the minister made the King's friends feel that he was indispensable, they on their part made him feel his dependence upon them, now that he was left without the support of Grenville and Windham. His majorities became less than those which had been held insufficient to maintain his predecessors in power. The Bill for dealing with military defence was carried by a majority of forty only, and he was reminded in the House that he had fewer supporters than the man whom he had displaced. It was true, and felt to be so, that Pitt was less dependent upon the number of his followers than a feeble minister like Addington would be; nevertheless, the position was humiliating, and tended to become dangerous. So towards the end of the year, as there was no chance of gaining over Grenville, the Premier had to turn to his old follower, and Addington joined the Ministry, at the same time receiving a peerage. The title Viscount Sidmouth, which he now assumed, was that under which he was known for so many years as one of the most obstinate and determined opponents of every form of liberty, the advocate of repression and coercion, the friend of bigotry and intolerance. In all these points he was such a man as a king like George III. would delight to honour. The alliance brought temporary strength to the Ministry, as was manifested when divisions were taken. But there was no heart in the once proud minister to enter upon any home policy. He was reproached by Fox, when Parliament met in January, 1806, with doing nothing towards redeeming his old pledges in favour of the Roman Catholics. He defended himself, but without much spirit. That the House of Commons was not in a mood to undertake any earnest work was manifested by the fate which befel Wilberforce's motion for the abolition of the slave trade. On previous occasions he had carried his proposals through the House with large majorities, but when he renewed them on the 19th of February of this year, he was defeated by seventy-seven to seventy votes.

The state of affairs in Europe was enough to damp the ardour of Parliament, as it was evidently wearing away the life of the Premier. Everywhere during this fatal year of 1806 Napoleon was triumphing over the coalitions formed by Pitt, defeating armies, overthrowing thrones, and finally alienating allies. The universal gloom was pierced only by the dazzling ray of victory which shot from Trafalgar ; but that victory, although it secured the safety of Great Britain from invasion, could do little to affect the fortunes of France on the continent. In the midst of the depression and almost despair which fell upon the minister from these causes, he received a blow which struck alike at his sense of official honour and his warmest personal friendship. His colleague and friend Lord Melville was accused of gross misconduct in his office of treasurer of the navy. When he was impeached by the Commons, Melville was acquitted by the Peers of the high crimes and misdemeanours of which he was accused ; but he was convicted of great irregularities and of conduct in office which led to his dismissal from the Ministry, and even to the striking of his name off the list of privy councillors. It was evident to all who saw him that Pitt was grievously hurt by these proceedings, the bitterness of which he had to bear almost without sympathy. They led to further complications and troubles in the Cabinet. Sidmouth and his friends had gone with the opposition in the attack on Melville, yet they selected that time to ask for appointments which would have strengthened their own position in the Ministry. These concessions Pitt would not make, and a division was the consequence. Parliament was prorogued on the 12th of June, and two days afterwards Sidmouth and three of his friends resigned their offices. How the minister would have met Parliament, and what permanent arrangements he would have made in his Cabinet in consequence of these resignations, cannot be known. There were rumours of efforts to induce the King to accept Fox, but George III. was then in a terrible condition. Nearly blind and scarcely sane, it was difficult to give him information, and quite impossible to reason with

or convince him. As the autumn came on the European misfortunes increased. First came the news of the capitulation of Mack at Ulm, then the victory of Trafalgar gave relief ; but directly after, the Battle of Austerlitz and the secession of Austria from the confederation destroyed all chance of success. Before Parliament met in January, Pitt was lying hopelessly ill. The session opened on the 21st of June, 1806, and on the 23rd the great minister died.

On a consideration of the general character of Pitt as a statesman this is not the place to enter. Whether or not he would have made a good peace minister has been discussed with quite sufficient fulness by Macaulay and other writers. On one point most men are now agreed, he was not competent to deal with the difficulties of the terrible conflict which he had been one of the active instruments in provoking. A war against ideas and principles was easily aroused, but was not easy either to conduct with success or to close with honour. Pitt's whole later life was spent in the endeavour to control events which were too mighty for him ; and his responsibilities as a war minister gave him no chance of showing how he would have governed the country in which at one time his power seemed to be supreme. Yet what light is thrown upon the subject of his earlier official conduct, and his treatment of such political questions as were forced upon him in later years, does not enable us to form a very favourable opinion either of his wisdom or of the real strength of his character. This we shall see if we try to ascertain how far his views and his actions affected the character and influence of English parties, and facilitated or hindered their operation to the advantage or injury of the nation. When Pitt first took office, the cause of Liberalism, and especially that phase of it which was directed to obtain constitutional reform, was most favourably situated. It had been accepted by Chatham and by many of the Whig chiefs, the representatives of the great houses, and had been forced upon the national attention by the efforts of Fox, Sheridan, Wilkes, Junius, Sawbridge, Barré, Cartwright, and other speakers and

writers. It had secured good divisions in both Houses of Parliament, and although the King was an enemy to all changes, his opposition could have been overcome on this as it had been by Chatham and Rockingham on other subjects. Fox at this time had weakened his own influence with his natural followers by his coalition with North; but the amount of dislike which he thereby incurred is a measure of the strength of the public feeling on the other side, and the allegiance of the reformers was not lost to the cause, but was transferred to Pitt, who had made himself its special champion. He had brought forward the subject of electoral reform more than once in the House of Commons, and on one occasion was within twenty votes of carrying his resolution. There seemed every probability that a very considerable measure of reform might then have been carried without any serious conflict between the various classes and parties in the State. Without Pitt no permanent administration could have been secured on the anti-reform basis. The circumstances and conditions under which he accepted place, and the character of the support on which he consented to depend, soon changed the aspect of affairs. In the memorable contest which he waged against the members of the coalition and the majority of the House of Commons, he found arrayed against him nearly every section of independent politicians, Whig and Tory alike. His chief supporters were the court and the people called "the King's friends." The courage and the vigour with which he carried on the struggle won for him a good deal of public sympathy; and, outside the close Parliamentary ranks of his opponents, he still commanded much of the confidence and inspired something of the hope amongst reformers which, by the coalition, Fox for the time seemed to have betrayed and destroyed. Still, when the long fight was over and the dissolution came, court influence, patronage, and money were largely responsible for the greatness of the majority, and on more than one occasion afterwards it was seen to be the following rather of the monarch than the minister. Pitt amply justified the trust and paid for the support which he

received from the King. We have seen the process by which this was done—how he quietly dropped the reform question ; how, on the outbreak of the French Revolution, he commenced a system of repression and coercion which made every expression of a Liberal sentiment penal, and branded every man who strove for popular rights as a criminal ; and how he had converted the House of Peers from an aristocracy in which many of the great houses were actuated by a traditional love of liberty, into an assemblage of mere landholders and placemen filled with the narrowest class prejudices. At his death he left a country from which the energy of political hope had been expelled, and a Parliament from which no national regeneration could be expected.

The hopelessness of the position as respected Liberalism and reform was soon manifested by the issue of what might at first sight have appeared a favourable event. The complication, not amongst parties, but the leaders of parties, was so great that no Ministry could be formed which did not include Grenville and Fox, now become inseparable. The advent of Fox to office might well seem to be a triumph for the principles which he had so long advocated. It was really nothing of the kind. Office with him did not involve the power to accomplish any of the objects in domestic legislation on which his heart was set. The “all talents” administration was called a combination ; the word *coalition*, which properly described it, having been rendered unpopular by former transactions. But a coalition it really was, since it included Fox the Radical and Sidmouth the Tory. Efforts were made by the King and his friends to form a Cabinet without Fox, the prejudices of George III. being as strong as ever against the great orator. This was found to be impossible, and on the 5th of February, 1806, the new Ministry was announced. Grenville was Premier, Fox Foreign Secretary ; other members being Grey—now become Lord Howick by the elevation of his father to the peerage—Windham, Romilly, Sidmouth, and Ellenborough. The appointment of the last-named peer as a member of the Cabinet must in itself have been evidence

of the weakness of Fox. Ellenborough was supposed, with Sidmouth, to represent the King's feelings and opinions. He was at the time Lord Chief Justice of England—a position which he, very prudently for his own interests, declined to vacate for the precarious post of Lord Chancellor. But the impropriety on all constitutional grounds of making the chief administrator of the law a member of the executive Government was glaring. It needed only to suppose that when Horne and Thelwall and other Liberals were prosecuted, a member of the Cabinet, one of the actual prosecutors, might sit as the highest judge on their trial, to prove how improper such an arrangement must be. The House of Commons, however, obediently accepted the plan, a motion condemning it being rejected by 224 to 64 votes. There was no question of home policy on which Fox, Grey, and their friends could hope to carry out their views. They would not, indeed, give any promise or undertaking not to bring forward the Catholic claims, and distinctly declared that they should vote for any proposal of the kind which might be introduced by independent members; but to enter a Cabinet with Sidmouth and Ellenborough was virtually to abandon the cause. Nor were the Tory members of the Government the only ones by whom a liberal and progressive policy was opposed. The Whigs represented by Grenville and Windham were little less adverse to constitutional reforms. This division of sympathy has been well defined by the statement that "Mr. Fox was the head of the old opposition, which had opposed the war, advocated broad popular liberties, and appealed to broad popular sympathies; and Lord Grenville the leader of the new, which, though Whig in its principles, had supported the war as a painful necessity, and discountenanced any present extension of popular liberties." *

This condition of affairs completely silenced the Radicals in Parliament. Under the leadership of Fox, they had kept up a constant if not a hopeful fight. They had protested against the oppressive and coercive policy of successive

* "Introduction to the History of the Peace," p. cxlvi.

governments ; they had from time to time introduced motions in favour of electoral and administrative reform, and had voted for justice to Roman Catholics and Nonconformists. Even these protests would be meaningless and ridiculous when the old movers of the resolutions, the old tellers in divisions, occupied the offices from which alone any practical legislation must emanate. There was but one question raised on which Fox could speak with his old heartiness, and on which he could entertain any hope of a successful issue, and that was the abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce had for years, in season and out of season, kept this object before the attention of Parliament, and on its behalf had appealed to the conscience of the nation. It had not been made a strict party question, but the Radicals had always given it their support. The new Government formally took up the business, although they were not unanimous even here, for Sidmouth had been a constant opponent of Wilberforce. Fox did not live to see the actual accomplishment of the noble work, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that it was safe in the Commons, for he carried a motion in its favour by 115 to 14 votes.

Lest, in spite of the opposing influences by which they were surrounded in the Cabinet itself, the Liberals in the Ministry should try to accomplish any work of reform, the section of Tories which was left out of office commenced now for the first time the use of that instrument of obstruction which has since become so famous. For night after night Castlereagh and others made long speeches on no particular occasion, inflicting unbearable weariness upon the ministerial ranks, until Sheridan, as a sort of despairing joke, proposed that the burden should be distributed by the process of forming relays of attendants, so that no one should be called upon to bear the whole of the merciless infliction. What he suggested in fun a later generation has been obliged to adopt in sober earnest, for Canning, and Castlereagh and Perceval did not realize the full value of the method they invented.

What Fox had really hoped to do, and what he strove with all his might to effect, was to bring to a close the great

war to which he had always been opposed, and which was working so much misery to England and to the whole of Europe. Here he was again doomed to bitter disappointment. On this point he met with no serious opposition at home, for there were few English politicians who were not anxious to end a contest which was pressing so heavily on the resources of their country. But the struggle which the Radical policy might have prevented no effort could arrest. Napoleon, in the pride of his victory, the greatness of his ambition, and the intensity of his hatred of England, would consent to no terms which the most peace-loving minister could recommend to this country as consistent with either her honour or her safety. So the war, which had become one for national existence, had to be carried on. In whatever the Government for the time being proposed by way of warlike preparation, they met with a ready support in Parliament. When Windham brought forward his military proposals Canning opposed them, but, by a majority of 271 to 119, they were carried in the House of Commons. But Fox was not destined to carry on the painful and hopeless work much longer. Parliament was prorogued on the 23rd of July, but for two months before the great Liberal had been unable to attend. He was never more to visit the scenes of his labours, of his triumphs as an orator, of his reverses as a statesman. On the 13th of September he died, and England lost the service of one of her noblest and truest sons, the cause of liberty one of its most faithful and most brilliant advocates.

The character and the work of Fox must be tried by a peculiar standard. He was a Radical when Radicalism was neither appreciated nor understood. Passionate in his denunciation of wrong, fearless in his proposals for reform, a sublime agitator and leader of forlorn hopes, he was yet born into the ranks of the governing class, and it was as much part of the necessities of his position and of his inherited nature as it must have been the desire of his active spirit, to aim at taking part in the practical government of the country. Yet he knew, and did not hesitate to declare, that under the social

and political conditions of his time it was impossible for him to carry out, when he was in office, the objects for which he had striven when in opposition. So that the time of what might be called his success as a politician was the time of his worst failure as a statesman. There were no instruments either in Parliament or in the constituencies with which he could perform the work on which his heart was set. It was this which made it inevitable that he should be associated with men who shared neither his hopes nor his aims. The difference was more in appearance than in essence, as to whether his colleagues were Whigs like Grenville and Windham, who were set against any increase of the popular element in the State, or Tories and King's friends, who disliked all change. This misfortune was more striking, but not more real, when he sat in the Cabinet with North or with Sidmouth, the representatives of a party which hated him, and whose principles he hated. It was when he was free from the restraints of office ; when he could become the mouthpiece of the unenfranchised millions of his countrymen, setting forth their sufferings and demanding their rights ; when he was the champion of liberty and progress ;—it was then, with few followers and little power, that he was really successful in serving the best interest of his country, and in building up the solid foundation of his own great fame.

The administration, weak and divided as it was, could not long survive its greatest member. With the sitting Parliament clearly nothing could be done. It had existed only four sessions, and during that short period it had swung round from Addington to Pitt, from Pitt to the coalition ; it had been constant only in its determination to support the King and to resist change. There was just a hope that a new Parliament, elected under their direct influence, might maintain in office ministers many of whom were Whigs. The chance was not great, but it seemed worth trying, and so dissolution was suddenly announced. The experiment was a failure, as it could scarcely help being. The controlling influences over the constituencies, the borough-mongers, landlords, and placemen,

could be affected by no patriotic feelings, and there was no great question raised to stir the enthusiasm of the people. So the new Parliament, which met on the 19th of December, 1806, was exactly like the old, just as untrustworthy, just as time-serving. If ministers would carry on the war and leave other things alone, if they would not disturb institutions and would not annoy the court, they might go on ; otherwise, they must take the consequence. So the address in reply to the King's speech was passed without a division. One thing this shortest of Parliaments did worthy of being remembered : it passed the Act for the abolition of the slave trade.

The royal assent was given to the Act on the 25th of March, 1807, but before that time the fate of the Ministry was sealed. On the 5th of March Lord Howick, who had succeeded Fox as foreign minister, moved for leave to bring in a bill for securing to all his Majesty's subjects the privilege of serving in the army and navy on taking a prescribed oath. This measure would have laid open all grades in both services to Roman Catholics. Perceval opposed the introduction of the bill, but it was supposed that the King had assented to its introduction, and leave was given. The royal permission had, however, it afterwards appeared, been given only to a portion of the proposals, and even to them under some mistake. When Sidmouth, Malmesbury, Eldon, and Perceval conferred with him and explained the real provisions of the measure and their own objections, the monarch recalled his consent, and the bill was withdrawn. But the efforts of the Tories, both in and out of the Government, and the determination of the King did not end here. The King demanded that ministers should give a written undertaking never again to bring forward the measure, nor to propose anything with regard to the Catholic question to his Majesty. This was an engagement which was not only repulsive to their sense of independence and honour, but was directly contrary to their duty as responsible ministers. They therefore refused to give the required pledge, and the King dismissed them. The vindication of their policy with regard to the Irish Catholics

was made by Grenville in words that might form the justification of all subsequent proposals of conciliation, and the condemnation of the whole policy of coercion and repression. "I consider," declared Grenville, "that four millions of Catholic subjects are to be governed by conciliation and kindness, and not by intolerance and exclusion."

The Government were dismissed, and the House of Commons, elected under their own auspices, and in which they hoped to find a majority to support them against the court, failed them on the first trial. On the 25th of March, a new Cabinet having been formed, the old ministers resigned their seals of office. On the 3rd of April the trial of strength took place. Mr. Brand moved "That it is contrary to the first duties of the confidential servants of the Crown to restrain themselves by any pledge, express or implied, from offering to the King any advice that the course of circumstances might render necessary for the welfare and security of any part of his Majesty's extensive empire." The terms of this resolution were incontrovertible, and the Whigs confidently expected to carry it; but it was lost by thirty-two votes, the numbers being 258 to 226. Another resolution more directly personal, expressing the deepest regret at the late change of administration, moved by Mr. Littleton, was rejected by a still greater majority, the votes being 244 for and 198 against. These opinions were remarkable not only as deciding the fate of the late administration, but as indicating the lines on which, even under circumstances most favourable to Liberal success, the government of the country was to be conducted. This point is well put by Mr. Wingrove Cooke, who says, "Nothing can more clearly prove the subserviency of the House of Commons, as at that time constituted, than that the same assembly which had pronounced in favour of the Grenville Catholic Bill readily turned over to a Tory administration, and refused by a majority of thirty-two to vote that it was contrary to the duties of a minister to restrain himself by a pledge as to the advice he should offer to the King." *

* "History of Parties," vol. iii. p. 465.

The new Ministry was entirely Tory. The Duke of Portland was the nominal Premier, but he was old and infirm, and the real leadership was understood to be in the hands of Perceval, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Eldon was Lord Chancellor, enough in itself to banish all hope of progress. Canning indeed, who became foreign minister, was destined to disturb the equanimity of the Tory ranks ; but at present, although not quite understood by his colleagues, he did not, in the opinion of the country, alter the complexion of the Government. For such a Cabinet even the Parliament which had given such proofs of its docility contained too large an element of Liberalism, and on the 27th of April it was prorogued and dissolved, having existed only four months and seven days. The new House of Commons was, if possible, to be made "thorough." Every bad political instrument was brought into use to effect this purpose. The privy purse was drawn upon to aid corruption ; the influence of the Crown was used to fascinate ; the power of Government was exercised to intimidate ; the no-popery cry was raised to excite the bigot ; the attractions of place and pension were offered to allure the corrupt and the ambitious. Never were the evils of the unreformed system of representation so signally exhibited, so unblushingly adopted. The success was complete. The New Parliament met on the 22nd of June, and when test votes were taken on proposed addresses censuring the late dissolution, they were lost in the Lords by 160 to 67, and in the Commons by 350 to 155. The high Tory party had obtained that full power which it was destined to use for many a year, in opposing every form of liberty and repressing every sign of national life.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE DISMISSAL OF GRENVILLE TO THE END OF
THE WAR (1807–1815).

THE death of Fox, the dismissal of the Grenville Ministry, and the election of the new court and Tory Parliament, were events which seemed to mark the completion of the ruin of the Liberal party. For the time its power for any useful or effective work in the State seemed utterly broken. There were Whigs in the House of Commons, of course. Some of the pocket boroughs were owned, and some of the counties were dominated, by the great houses which had always belonged to that party, and, as we have seen, 155 members voted against the address to the Crown when Parliament met. These numbers were quite insufficient to produce any effect upon the policy of the Government, so long as they were not backed up by any strong manifestation of public feeling outside ; and no such support could be hoped for, or invited, by the bulk of the Whigs. They derived neither their inspiration nor their election from the people. They were Liberals in the sense that they advocated—especially when in opposition—such reforms in the administration, and such moderate enlargement of the popular liberties, as would not alter the balance of the Constitution, nor remove the ultimate power in the State from the hands of the governing classes. These are conditions which would render the obtainment of effectual reform at any time difficult, and, under circumstances like those which existed in 1807, absolutely impossible. At that period reformers were faced by the power of the Crown,

which had been insidiously but constantly increasing, and was now exercised by a sincere but obstinate King, opposed with a passion related to his insanity to any change; by ministers who were either in complete sympathy or in virtual subserviency to the monarch; by a Parliament of which the upper House was swamped by the nominees of the court, and the lower one was filled by creatures of those nominees; and by a large and influential class outside, who had not recovered from the terror into which they had been thrown by the outbreak of the French Revolution. Such forces were not to be successfully met by a minority who derived their own authority from no more popular source, and many of whom had at one time or other taken office, or worked in harmony, with the very ministers they were now opposing.

All the distinction which the public could see between the Whigs and the Tories was, as the writer in the "Annual Register" declared, that between the ins and outs; and no doubt he was justified in saying that, with regard to both, "the people at large had absolutely lost all confidence in a majority of them."* The Whigs had not yet come to see that no progress of any kind, no reform of administration, no removal of abuses, would ever be possible in England without a great and substantial change in the electoral system, and the provision of machinery by which the people themselves could obtain direct representation of their wishes and their wants. This opinion, however, was fast spreading in the country, and it never was without some few advocates in Parliament itself. There was a remnant of the Whigs who still preserved the traditions sent down by Chatham and Richmond, by Fox and Sawbridge, and who maintained the succession of Radicalism in both Houses. They were not, however, the men who moved the masses outside, and their work had to be supplemented by that of agitators who acknowledged no allegiance to the old party leaders. It was almost a necessity of the struggle which was slowly approaching, that the popular advocates should be to a great extent outside the

* "Annual Register," 1807, p. 235.

ordinary social and political influences, and nearer in sympathies to the rough and suffering millions, than to the smooth and subservient courtiers and placemen. Easy-going and respectable folk, fearful of giving offence, and anxious to stand well in the opinion of their little world, are not the stuff by which the forlorn hopes of politics are led. To give and take rough words and hard blows were the inevitable conditions of such a position, and this must be remembered when any attempt is made to estimate the character and the work of the Radicals in the beginning of this century.

The two men who first assumed a position of antagonism to the old parties on behalf of the popular cause were not by social position and fortune separated from those whom they attacked. Lord Cochrane and Sir Francis Burdett, we are told by the writer previously quoted, "had become popular by disclaiming all attachment to all parties and factions." The writer goes on to say that the abilities and energy of Sir F. Burdett "had procured him a reputation not to be tarnished by any or all of the surmises concerning the danger of innovation, that is, the danger of timeous reformation and reparation." * In accounting for the hold which Burdett had at this time obtained upon the confidence and almost the affection of the people, we must not look forward to the eccentricities and follies of his later years, when, puffed by vanity and ambition, he played tricks which shocked his friends and admirers; or when, disappointed in his inordinate desire for notoriety, he deserted the cause of which he had constituted himself the champion. In 1807 he aroused enthusiasm, because he made himself the spokesman of the wide-spread feeling that without constitutional changes no substantial reform of any kind was possible, and because he declared that neither of the two great parties in the State really desired such changes.

The new Ministry soon began to show the principles upon which they considered that government ought to be conducted, and the new Parliament as quickly gave the assurance of its

* "Annual Register," 1807.

support. On the 9th of July, less than a month after the opening of the session, a new Irish Coercion Bill was brought in; it was opposed by Sheridan, but carried by 108 votes to 10. The attention of the ministers was mainly devoted to the conflict with France, which was becoming ever more and more desperate. It was now, that, finding it hopeless to contend with England on the sea, and impossible for that reason to strike her by means of the long-threatened invasion, Napoleon pushed forward his scheme of forcing all the states which were either friendly or subservient to him to interdict all commerce with this country, hoping thereby to ruin the trade by which alone we were enabled to keep up the contest. During this and the following year, the British Government responded to this policy by issuing the famous Orders in Council. These orders, which damaged our own trade more even than did the action of Napoleon, and which ultimately involved us in war with the United States, were issued in forms of constantly increasing stringency. They culminated in a decree that no neutral vessels would be allowed to trade with France, or with any other hostile country, unless they first touched at an English port, and, paying custom dues, obtained proper permission. These orders were vigorously but vainly resisted by the opposition, but they were not revoked till 1812. Amongst the noteworthy things respecting them is the fact that Henry Brougham established his first claim to the notice and respect of the country by his vigorous opposition to their maintenance, appearing before the House as counsel for merchants and other persons in Liverpool.

Whilst the Government was thus engrossed by the war, and the public interest in politics was limited to a desire for fuller representation, questions were now and again brought forward with a view of improving the social and material condition of the people. All these proposals emanated from the opposition side, and such of them as did not involve any constitutional reform, but could be regarded as gifts from the governing class to the community, were sure of the support of the united Whig party. Under existing conditions mem-

bers of that party were willing enough to make suggestions which, when in office, they were not so ready to adopt, but which the Radical section had to take up, agitate for, and ultimately carry out. Amongst subjects of this kind was that of national education. The Parliamentary discussion of this great question may be said to have been begun in 1807, and with the hope of success which was to be long deferred. On the 6th of August in that year Whitbread brought in a bill for the education of the poor by establishing schools in all the parishes of England. To the surprise, no doubt, of its author, this passed through all its stages in the House of Commons. There was no chance of such a measure being carried by the Peers, and it was at once thrown out, Lord Eldon being, of course, the chief and most violent of its opponents. It was said, and generally believed, that the bill was only allowed to pass the Commons because of the certainty of its rejection in the Lords.

The year 1808 was marked by no political activity. The debates on the Orders in Council occupied much of the time of Parliament, and the war and its consequences took up the remainder. In the following year there was more general activity, especially on the part of what was called the extreme opposition section. The earlier part of the session was occupied by the consideration of the charges against the Duke of York, which led to his retirement from the position of commander-in-chief. The inquiry—or, as it might well be called, the prosecution—of the royal culprit was commenced at the instance of Mr. G. L. Wardle, a militia officer, who had been at one time a Tory, and having left that party, had not stopped short at Whiggism, but had joined Sir F. Burdett and the Radicals. The remainder of the session from the beginning of May was devoted almost entirely to a series of discussions on Parliamentary reform, in which Whigs and Radicals seemed to be in competition for leadership on the subject.

The campaign was opened by W. A. Madocks, who on the 5th of May brought a charge of electoral corruption against two

of the ministers, Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Perceval. This was rejected, but was repeated in an altered form on the 11th of the same month, and was again defeated, the numbers being 85 for, and 310 against. Both these motions were avowedly brought forward with the view of proving the necessity for reform. In the same month Curwen moved for leave to bring in a bill for the prevention of bribery and corruption. This was the mild Whig method of dealing with the subject. Windham immediately opposed even the proposition for leave to be given. He said "it had been for many years his opinion that the House ought strenuously to oppose as dangerous and mad any proposal for Parliamentary reform," and this was the so-called old Whig policy which Windham declared he had imbibed from Burke. The ministers, however, allowed the bill to pass, but they altered it so completely in committee that its parents would not own it. So thorough was the change that Lord Folkestone moved that a new title should be given, and that it should be called, "A bill for more effectually preventing the sale of seats in Parliament for money, and for promoting a monopoly thereof to the treasury by means of patronage," and this curious proposal he took to a division, securing 28 votes for it against 133 for Government. Another proposal which may be taken as coming from the broader section of the official Whigs was made on the 8th of June by Whitbread, who moved for an inquiry as to "how far it may be expedient to limit the number of persons holding seats together with pensions, sinecures, and places of emolument under the Crown." This was defeated by a majority of fifty-nine, there being fifty-four votes recorded in its favour.

It was now the turn of the Radicals to submit a scheme of reform, and this was done on the 15th of June by Sir F. Burdett. The plan he brought forward contained the following propositions :—

1. That freeholders and others subject to direct taxation in support of the poor, the Church, and the State be required to elect members to serve in Parliament.

2. That each county be sub-divided according to its

taxed male population, and each sub-division required to elect one representative.

3. That the votes be taken in each parish by the parish officers, and that all the elections should be finished in one and the same day.

4. That the parish officers make the return to the sheriff's court, to be held for that purpose at stated periods.

5. That Parliament be brought back to a constitutional duration.

The proposal was supported by Mr. Hutchinson and Sir T. Turton, and on a division sixteen votes were recorded in its favour.* The plan, it will be seen, was substantially the same as that propounded thirty years before by the Duke of Richmond, and that formulated by Fox and his Westminster committee.

The Parliamentary session closed on the 21st of September, but the end of the year saw changes in the administration which had effects upon the relations of all parties in the State. The dissatisfaction of Canning with the policy and conduct of his colleague Castlereagh had been expressed to the Premier and to other members of the Cabinet, but it had been concealed from the person whose position and character were implicated. Further concealment being impossible, Castlereagh was at last informed of the real circumstances, but this was done in a way which led to a not unnatural mistake as to the course which Canning had pursued. A duel between the two ministers followed. Canning was wounded, and both of them retired from the Cabinet. In all these proceedings

* Hansard records the names of the minority, which may be taken generally as constituting the Radical party at that time :

Adams, Charles	Cambell, G.	Cuthbert, J. R.
Knapp, G.	Madocks, W. A.	Moore, P.
Turton, Sir T.	Western, C. C.	Hutchinson, C.
Burdett, Sir F.	Combe, H.	Tracey, Hanbury
Lefevre, C. S.	Maxwell, W.	Thornton, Henry
Wardle, G. L.	Wharton, J.	

To these must be added Lord Cochrane, who was accidentally shut out from the division, and Mr. Lytton, who paired.

there was no doubt that the prejudices and sympathies of Eldon and the high Tory party were set against Canning. He was too clever and too energetic for them, and his well-known views on the Catholic question were enough to make them distrust and dislike him. So that, after the immediate affair had passed over, Castlereagh was restored to the Ministry ; and Canning, the ablest man in the party, was left outside, with the result, no doubt, of directing his thoughts and increasing his attachment to those points on which he was most out of harmony with the people who had injured him. This was the commencement of one of those rifts in the Tory party which broke it up from within when there was no constitutional means of overcoming it from without. The ministerial changes of the year did not end with this. On the 29th of October the Duke of Portland, the nominal prime minister, died. Efforts were now made to extend the basis of the Administration, and negotiations were opened with some of the Whigs. They failed, and the Cabinet was reconstructed on the old lines, Perceval becoming Premier, the Marquis of Wellesley Foreign Secretary, and Lord Liverpool Secretary at War. One appointment to a junior post serves to connect the past generation with our own. Lord Palmerston, who had entered Parliament in 1807, was now made Under Secretary at War. From this time, 1809, to 1828 he continued in office under the Tories, and was almost the only man of eminence who, leaving that party, became a thorough-going Whig, with no more popular sympathy or enthusiasm than the driest member of the most select Whig family. In this year, too, Robert Peel first entered Parliament, a man who was destined to carry on the series of revolts and desertions which shook the Tory party and facilitated reforms.

The session closed on the 21st of June, and Parliament did not meet again until the 23rd of January, 1810. There was of course no change in the position of parties, ministers carrying the address in the Commons by 263 to 167 ; but in the course of the year there were lively and not very creditable scenes in the House. There were to be animated discussions

on the famous Walcheren expedition, the loss and disgrace attending which had powerfully affected public opinion. In order, as he said, to prevent the charges against the Government and the commanders being made public before the replies could be made, Mr. Yorke, ministerial member, enforced the standing order for the exclusion of strangers. On this, Sheridan moved for an inquiry into the propriety of this course, and was defeated by 166 to 80. This decision created a good deal of discontent outside, and among others the members of a debating society called the British Forum discussed the subject. The president of the society was Mr. John Gale Jones, who published placards announcing that the exclusion of strangers was an attack on the liberties of the press which ought to be censured, and announced further debates on the action of Mr. Yorke. This was held to be a breach of privilege, and the printer was brought up to the bar. Dean, the printer, gave at once the name of the author, and Jones was ordered to attend. On the 22nd of February Jones appeared, and after saying that at the time he issued the placard and conducted the debates he thought he was in order, he now admitted that he was wrong, and threw himself on the mercy of the House. The House was not inclined to show much mercy; Dean was reprimanded and dismissed, but Jones was committed to Newgate for a gross breach of the privileges of Parliament.

A more important claimant for the distinction of martyrdom on behalf of the liberty of the press now came forward. Sir Francis Burdett called in question the legality of the whole proceedings against Jones, and on the 12th of March moved that the prisoner should be discharged. Only the most thorough-going members of his party went with him on this occasion, and he was defeated by 153 to 14. From this vote he appealed from Parliament to the people. His speech in the House had been violent, but he republished it, with additions still more reckless, in Cobbett's *Weekly Register*, and accompanied it by a letter, in which he denied the right of the House to commit for breach of privilege, and asked

whether our liberties should lie at the mercy of the House of Commons, an assembly which he described as a part of our fellow-subjects collected together by means which it is not necessary to describe.* The attack was too gross, the challenge too public, to be overlooked. On the 27th of March Mr. Lethbridge introduced the subject to the House. It was delayed by several adjournments, but finally on the 5th of April it was decided, by a majority of thirty-eight, to commit Sir Francis to the Tower. He did not, however, intend to acquiesce quietly in the sentence, but rather to make it the occasion of a great public demonstration. He refused to submit to the warrant, and wrote a letter to the Speaker, denying its legality, and contemptuously protesting against the authority of the House. He barricaded his residence so as to prevent access by the officers, and the sheriff, who for some days was uncertain how to proceed, at last placed the matter in the hands of the law officers of the Crown. The delay was utilized to the utmost by Burdett, and by his admirers and followers. Crowds assembled round the house and kept watch and ward day and night, and rioting and tumult were practically unchecked. At last it was decided to take the fortress by storm. A little army comprising cavalry and infantry marched to the aid of the civil authorities, and, a breach being made in one of the area windows, the besiegers gained the citadel. When the victors marched into the presence of the defeated commander, they found him prepared to form a fitting subject for a great historical picture. He was seated, expounding to his little son, who stood by his side, the glorious principle of Magna Charta, a copy of which great document he held in his hand. The officers ruthlessly broke up this picturesque family group, and, although Sir Francis refused to submit to anything but actual force, he was at last quietly led downstairs, placed in a carriage, and driven to the Tower.

* The letter, which, with much violence and rhodomontade, contains some able arguments and some valuable historical precedents, is given entire in the "Annual Register," 1810, and is quoted also in Hansard.

The worst difficulties were yet to be faced. There were excited crowds in the streets, anxious to rescue their champion. The soldiers, to avoid as far as possible the violence and obstruction of the mob, took a circuitous and unexpected route to the Tower. Other troops, of which an unusually large number had been called to London to meet the emergency, marched to the Tower to secure and protect the approaches. By these means, although the news of the arrest rapidly spread, and the populace in thousands hurried towards the great prison, the captive was got safely into the Tower. But the public excitement increased every moment, the soldiers were mobbed and assaulted, and when a cannon was fired, as usual, to announce the reception of a State prisoner, it was said that the Tower guns were firing on the people. This roused the passion of the crowd to an ungovernable pitch, and the soldiers, who had to fight their way, fired and killed two or three people and wounded many others. The war in the streets was soon over, but the political contest waged more fiercely than ever. Burdett was now at the height of his popularity, and was as much the hero of the hour as Wilkes had ever been. His name was on every tongue, his portrait in every house, his praises in every popular print. He made the most of the occasion, and brought actions for false imprisonment against the Speaker, the serjeant-at-arms, and the governor of the Tower. This kept up the excitement both in and out of Parliament; for, whilst the papers were filled with the addresses to Burdett and his replies, the House of Commons had to decide whether or not any appearance should be entered in the law courts. This did not seem an easy problem to solve; a committee had to be appointed, and many debates took place. Nor was this the only trouble Parliament experienced. Petitions were sent in from the city of London and many other places, praying for the release of Burdett, some of them in terms highly disrespectful to the House; those from Westminster, Middlesex, and the city were especially so insolent that they were absolutely rejected.

The subject of these petitions forms for us one of the most interesting points in the whole affair. In the case of a popular demonstration, it is desirable to know not only what is the character of the hero of the hour, but what are the principles which he is supposed to represent. The merits and the importance of the object are transferred to the man, and what looks at first sight like simple hero-worship, is found to be, to a large extent, devotion to a cause. In the present case there was no doubt as to this. The petitions which asked for the release of Sir Francis all called in the most earnest terms for Parliamentary reform. The people were quite justified in uniting the two things. Burdett was at that time the leader of the most advanced section of reformers. He had formed a party—small of necessity, but very active—in the House of Commons who protested against the insufficiency of the claim of the existing legislature to represent the will or the wishes of the nation. The very documents for the issue of which the popular hero was now imprisoned, insisted strongly on this point. In the minds of his admirers, then, Sir Francis was the champion of the cause of reform, and it was easy to see how they were sure to overlook the eccentricities, the affectations, and the personal vanity of a man who had advocated their views in a corrupt Parliament, and was now suffering imprisonment for his efforts on their behalf. The interest in the event was not confined to any one class. “There was not,” it is said, “any gathering of men, however small, in which the privilege question was not argued. Lord Erskine had the honour of meeting the Prince of Wales at dinner one day, when the argument on the subject grew hot between them. Lord Erskine said that the principles which he advocated were those which had seated the family of his Royal Highness on the throne; and the Prince retorted that they were principles which would unseat any family from any throne.”* It was clear that Burdett was believed by people of all ranks to represent an important principle in national politics.

* “Introduction to the History of the Peace,” p. cclxxv.

The end of the performance was neither so melodramatic nor so dignified as its commencement and its progress. The release which was refused to popular pressure and could not be obtained by legal process, came about naturally by the prorogation of Parliament. The people, however, meant to make it the occasion of another great demonstration. It was known that Parliament would rise on the 21st of June, and preparations were made, with the knowledge and approval of Burdett, for a great procession to carry the hero from his prison to his home. An enthusiastic response was given by the people to the invitation to join in the celebration. On the appointed day all the streets from the Tower to Burdett's home were crowded. There were organized bands of men with banners and colours, there was a mounted escort, and everywhere, in roadway and on housetops, at windows and on platforms, thousands of eager people, decked with the popular blue ribbons, waited to greet the champion of reform, the martyr to freedom of the press. The whole mass, leaders, organizers, escort, processionists, spectators, were doomed to disappointment. There was in many minds fear lest the excited crowds in the streets should come into contact with the soldiers, who were ordered to be ready to act. Sir Francis shared these fears, and at the last moment he decided to break his engagement with his friends, to disappoint the public, and go quietly by water from the Tower, avoiding all the demonstrations which had been prepared for his honour. So Major Cartwright and the sheriffs and the other leaders went away, and, although the people determined to have their procession and parade their forces, the display of incense without the idol was but a tame affair.

There can be no doubt that this escapade weakened the influence of Burdett both in the country and in Parliament, and such a consequence was inevitable. Prudence and wisdom are admirable qualities, and are as valuable in political agitation as in any other undertaking. But prudence should be employed in the plan and design of a campaign; what men want to see in its conduct is courage. Burdett

may have been right in desiring to avoid the risks which his procession would involve; he was wrong in making or sanctioning the preparations, and summoning his supporters to the scene of danger, and then quietly leaving them to take care of themselves. His power with the people arose from their belief that he was prepared to suffer in their cause; his influence in Parliament was derived, not from his ability nor from the number or importance of his followers, but from the feeling that he was a daring leader, with the ability to incite, and the courage to lead, popular enthusiasm in a struggle against existing grievances and in defiance of existing institutions. In both these respects he suffered, and with him the cause of which he had made himself the mouthpiece suffered also.

The good that came of all this popular excitement and demonstrating was that it showed the mind of the people to be fixing itself with increasing firmness on the fact, that in Parliamentary reform was to be found the only hope of any change in the method of government that could improve their condition. This gave directness of purpose to the small section in Parliament who either sympathized with the desires or wished to obtain the direct confidence of the unrepresented masses. It kept up a permanent bond of union among what were then called the extreme opposition. More than this, it convinced the majority of the Whigs that they could expect no such outer support as would enable them to overcome the organized Toryism in Parliament if they did not take up this great question of reform. They had to compete with the Radicals for public confidence, and although they could not do this in the way of thoroughness of proposal, they could at least show larger minorities when they did move. In this year, 1810, on the 21st of May, whilst the Burdett excitement was going on, Mr. Brand moved for a committee of inquiry on the state of the representation. He obtained 115 votes, but was defeated by a majority of 119.

Of the questions which were destined to mark, or indeed to originate, differences of opinion between the Whig and the

Radical elements in the Liberal party, none were more active than those affecting religious freedom and dealing with the relations between Church and State. It is here that the conflict between authority and liberty is most directly waged. In such matters there was a distinct line to be drawn in theory between those who asserted and those who questioned the broad principle that the State has no right to interfere at all with religious belief, either to suppress, to limit, to encourage or endow one form or other. In practice the division was not so sharp—at least at the time which is now under consideration. There were but few Whigs who did not admit that the powers of the Church ought to be relaxed, and the privileges of Nonconformists extended. There were few, if any, Radicals who would not have been content with concessions very far short of disestablishment. It is true that when Fox made an attempt to repeal the Test and Corporation Act, he was opposed by Burke and some others of the Whigs; but the question had widened even in that short interval. There were two things which helped to accelerate the progress of public opinion; one was the increasing importance of the Irish Catholic question, and the other was the growth in numbers and in social influence of Nonconformists. This last element is one which must be taken into special account in watching the history of Radicalism. Not only did their questions lie at the root of all possible intellectual as well as political liberty, but the Nonconformists have been the most robust and active members of the party, both in and out of Parliament. Every incident, therefore, which illustrates their power and energy is worthy of record.

Such an event occurred in the early part of the year 1811. Usually discussions on religious and ecclesiastical questions were forced on by the Liberals, the Tories, as mere resisters of all change, not being desirous of raising any issues of the kind. On this occasion a different line was taken. Lord Sidmouth, most narrow of Tories, most devoted of Churchmen, was too anxious to display his zeal. He thought that some social disturbances, and was certain that some political

excitement, had been encouraged by the example and teaching of dissenting ministers. Without much, probably without any, consultation with Government, he brought in a bill to amend the Toleration Act. His object was to establish some State control over Nonconformist teachers by requiring them to take out licences before they could preach. These licences were to be issued subject to certificates of character. The proposal was immediately and strongly opposed in the House of Lords. Lord Holland was the first and most strenuous of the opponents, and he distinctly enunciated, in opposition to all claims for Government interference, the doctrine that it was the inalienable right of every man who thought himself able to instruct others, to do so, provided his doctrines were not incompatible with the peace of society. The bill was read the first time, but then the Nonconformists—or, as the “Annual Register” for the year calls them, the Separatists*—were in arms. Meetings were held, protests were made, and petitions poured in, and the Tories were shaken by this evidence of the widespread influence of dissent. When, on the 21st of May, the bill came on for the second reading, Sidmouth had not a single supporter, and his measure was rejected without a division. Ministers took advantage of this warning, and next year they introduced a bill themselves to amend the Toleration Act, but this time it was to extend and not to limit the liberties of the Separatists, who had shown their power for almost the first time, and made it felt and respected.

The liberty of the press was attacked more persistently and more successfully. Prosecutions against editors and writers increased with great rapidity. In the year 1810, amongst other sufferers from such prosecutions were Cobbett and John and Leigh Hunt, who all suffered fine and imprisonment. On the 20th of March in this year (1811), Lord Folkestone—one of the ultras—brought the subject before the House of Commons, and moved for an account of all prosecutions for libel by information *ex officio* since the first of May, 1801, and

* “Annual Register,” 1811.

of the proceedings which had been taken thereupon. There were thirty-six votes, exclusive of tellers, for this motion, of whom ten had been in the minority who had voted for Burdett's scheme of reform in 1809. They were on this occasion supported by some of the Whigs, amongst others by Whitbread, Romilly, Cavendish, and Brand. At this time Whitbread's vote was generally given for the most thorough-going proposals that were brought forward.

The Ministry kept steadily on with their policy of repression, their only idea of an instrument of government; and they were, as we see, backed up by the great majority in Parliament, who were able to understand that the full expression of popular opinion, or, at all events, any practical concessions to it, would be inconsistent with the basis of their own political power. To disagree with the views of the governing classes was wicked—this made Burdett and his friends disliked; to express that disagreement through the press was criminal—this sent Cobbett and the Hunts to prison; to try by popular action to give effect to the disagreement was treason—and this afterwards made the Peterloo massacre at Manchester possible.

The maintenance of the personal rights, dignity, and liberties of the humbler classes of the community was as much a matter of difficulty as the defence of intellectual freedom. On this matter, too, the Radicals, led by Burdett, registered protests when they could do nothing more. The cause of Cobbett's imprisonment was the publication of articles on the subject of discipline, and especially of flogging in the army, which it was said would lead to insubordination in the ranks. This question of flogging Burdett brought before the House of Commons on the 18th of June, when he moved for an address to the Prince Regent, asking him to take into consideration the flogging of soldiers, and praying him to issue such orders as would be calculated "to restrain, and finally to abolish, that cruel, unnecessary, and ignominious punishment." Brougham was teller with Burdett in the division on this motion, but they only took ten members with them. Such

proceedings as these, hopeless of immediate success, became the principal work of the Radical party. Their proposals were at first scorned as extreme and unpractical: they were always hated by the Tories. At first they were neglected or opposed by the Whigs, who slowly and piecemeal adopted them; and they came at last to be recognized as essential parts of a wise and liberal national policy.

The year 1812 opened amid signs of widespread distress, and manifestations of the lawlessness and disorder which suffering inevitably produces among an ignorant and neglected people. The Orders in Council were no doubt increasing the commercial depression, as well as causing a quarrel with the United States, and it was found impossible to maintain them. Efforts were vainly made to modify or to temporarily prolong the Orders, and at last they were entirely revoked. Brougham, who had, as counsel, worked so ably against them, had entered Parliament in 1810, and had now the satisfaction of assisting as a member in their defeat.

The people, who were starving, had not the patience to wait for the distant effect of economical reforms, and they had not the knowledge of the real origin of their distress. Many of them in the manufacturing districts, especially in Nottingham and its neighbourhood, thought that the introduction of machinery was the chief cause of their suffering. That the changes which mechanical improvements induced did for a time inflict hardship, not only on individuals, but on large classes, was undeniable, and it fell upon people who were unable to bear the strain either upon their resources or their temper. Violent and dangerous disturbances broke out, and frame-breaking became a crime which called for special treatment. No one denied that such excesses would have to be suppressed. Some members thought inquiry into the causes of the outrages and attempts to alleviate the distress ought to accompany the repressive measures. On the 14th leave was asked to bring in a bill positively revolting in its character. A division was challenged, but only eleven votes, including those of Burdett and Whitbread, were recorded against the

measure. When a companion bill had been introduced, Mr. Herbert moved for a committee of inquiry, but was defeated by forty votes to fifteen. It was of this coercion bill that Lord Byron, in his first speech to the House of Lords, declared that its provisions could only be enforced by twelve butchers as a jury and Jeffreys for a judge. It was only the prelude to a series of Acts by which Sidmouth endeavoured to suppress by mere force every public manifestation of opinions or feelings. It was resisted at every stage, and led to violent discussions—ministers, of course, making the most of the lamentable crimes of the Luddites and frame-breakers, and the opposition dwelling upon the misery and suffering which drove the ignorant people to violence. When a break in the distress and a pause in the violence took place, and men began to talk about political reform instead of joining in bread-riots, Sidmouth could not distinguish between the two processes, but restrained and punished one as well as the other. He regarded every speech as sedition, every meeting as treason.

Whilst these matters affecting the material prosperity of the country were being discussed, the Catholic question was pressing itself forward under conditions most embarrassing to the leaders of parties. It was now to find in ministerial complications and difficulties an opportunity of still further advance. On the 21st of April Lord Donoughmore submitted a resolution to the House of Lords in favour of Catholic relief, and obtained 102 votes to 174. For a similar motion brought forward in the Commons by Grattan, the votes were 215, and 300 voted against. This was the third Parliamentary defeat, and it proved that the influence of the Prince of Wales, who had now, by the confirmed illness of his father, acceded to full power, would not be exerted on behalf of religious liberty. But a sudden and painful event which altered the Administration made a great difference in the position of the question. On the 11th of May Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister, was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons. The murderer, Bellingham, was actuated by motives of private revenge, but the public consequences of his act were serious. It was no

easy matter to reconstruct the Ministry. There were conflicting elements in the Tory party which limited the area of selection. After the quarrel between Canning and Castlereagh they could not both sit in the same Cabinet. The ability of the one or the Parliamentary influence of the other must be given up. Then Sidmouth had to be counted with, and he and his friends also had a considerable number of nominees and dependents in the Commons. The sympathies of Eldon and Sidmouth were with Castlereagh, but the Marquis of Wellesley was an important man, and he would go with Canning. The Prince of Wales, too, was anxious to have his own part in the construction of the Ministry, and he was anxious to nominate Wellesley and Canning, and willing to consent to a coalition which should also include Grey and Grenville.

So negotiations, conferences, and intrigues went on, the front stairs and the back stairs of the court being both in constant use. The end of it all was the construction of a Ministry of the highest Tory pattern. Lord Liverpool was Premier, and Eldon, Sidmouth, and Castlereagh members. In this Ministry Robert Peel took office for the first time. Canning and Wellesley were left outside—left, fortunately, to develop those liberal tendencies which must have been suppressed if they had been in such a Cabinet. The result was soon manifested. On the 8th of June Liverpool announced that he had been appointed First Lord of the Treasury, and had undertaken to form a Ministry. On the 22nd of the same month Canning brought forward a resolution declaring that the House would, in the next session, take the Catholic question into consideration. This was carried by 235 votes to 106, a wonderful change in the opinion of the House since Grattan's defeat in the previous year. On the 1st of July a similar motion was only lost by a single vote.

This was a contest in which Canning the Tory, Grenville the Whig, and Burdett the Radical, could work and vote together; but there were questions on which the Whigs had opportunities of showing the depth of their own Liberalism

and the earnestness of their own purpose. On the subject of Parliamentary reform they continued the old half-hearted policy, not content to leave it alone, and not prepared to go for anything really effective. On the 8th of May this year Mr. Brand had moved for leave to bring in a bill to entitle copyholders to vote for knights of the shire. The proposal was not calculated to elicit much enthusiasm, and leave was refused, but eighty-eight members voted for it. On questions of economy and purity of administration the Whigs had, since the days of Burke, assumed to take a leading part. On this point they suffered this year not only defeat, but humiliation. They had carried, even against ministers, a bill for abolishing many sinecure places, but when economy threatened to touch the members of their own great houses they had to draw back. After the success of Bankes's Sinecure Bill, Mr. Creevy said that they should not be content with small savings, but should strike at great ones, and he proposed to deal with the two tellerships of the exchequer. This was striking at high game, for these offices were worth, it was estimated, about £26,000 a year each. But the holder of one of these very desirable places was the Marquis of Buckingham, who was the uncle of the great Whig magnate, Lord Grenville, and had been as Mr. George Grenville a Whig Premier himself. Lord Grenville gave it to be understood that he should regard support of the proposal as a personal attack upon himself, for he also held a lucrative sinecure. It was all very well to be economical in general terms or in small matters, but to touch the sacred houses was too much. So the Whigs who wanted to serve their chiefs joined with the Tories who opposed all reform or retrenchment, and even an inquiry into the circumstances of the case was refused by 148 votes to 40. Whitbread was again faithful to the popular cause, and so was Brougham. This kind of public spirit was not qualified to produce any popular enthusiasm to counteract the increasing Toryism of the borough-mongers and landlords. It was clear, however, that, what with the vote on Catholic emancipation and that on Bankes's Sinecure Bill, the existing Parliament was not to be

depended upon by Ministers, and so, having passed their Frame-breakers and Nottingham Peace Acts, they resolved on a prorogation on the 30th of July, and a dissolution on the 30th of September.

The result justified their action, for the new Parliament was more decidedly Tory than any previous one. The victory of the ministerialists was general; the opposition lost the cities of London and Bristol, and in Liverpool Canning defeated Brougham, who remained out of Parliament until 1816. For a time all attention was withdrawn from the thought of domestic questions, and would have been even had the opposition had anything like a spirited policy to offer. The power of Napoleon was at last shaken, and was soon to be completely shattered. The fatal Russian campaign, which it seemed that only the madness which the Greeks looked upon as preceding destruction could account for, had ended in terrible disaster and disgrace. With its defeat the fall of its author seemed inevitable, the more so because of the triumphs which Wellington was gaining in Spain, and the loss of men and of prestige which they inflicted upon the imperial cause. These things filled the country with hope and with earnestness: with hope that the long and desperate struggle was at last drawing to a close; with earnestness in the determination to let nothing interfere with the efforts of the Government to finish the great work.

When the new Parliament met on the 4th of November, ministers found their power great and their difficulties small. The address in reply to the speech passed without a division, although not without some severe criticism in both Houses. There was some debating force in the opposition, but the voting was in the hands of ministers. There were debates about the war with America, the opposition condemning the policy which led to the war and the manner in which it was conducted, but still no division was ventured on. The Radicals made one demonstration during the year, enough to show their courage and their numerical weakness. A printed petition had been sent from Nottingham in favour of Parlia-

mentary reform. It was against the custom, if not the law, of the House of Commons to receive printed petitions, and the rejection of this one was proposed by ministers on that account. This was resisted, and a division taken. Only those who were determined to support the cause under any conditions were likely to vote, and it is not surprising that only eleven members, exclusive of the tellers, were recorded in favour of receiving the petition.* The new session opened on the 4th of November, and by that time the prospects of the war had become still brighter. News of victory after victory continued to arrive, the whole country was in a state of enthusiasm, and there was an almost unanimous determination to let nothing interfere with the work of the Administration in carrying on the war. With this view the Houses adjourned on the 26th of December to the 1st of the following March.

By the time Parliament met again in March, 1814, the great drama on the Continent was nearly played out, and the leading actor forced for a time from the stage. Wellington had driven Soult far into the interior of France, and Blucher and the allies had so outnumbered and surrounded Bonaparte that he was unable, in spite of all his ability and energy, to preserve his capital. On the 30th of March Paris capitulated. On the following day the Emperor and the King of Prussia entered that city; and on the 4th of April Bonaparte signed an act of abdication. By the 30th of May the Treaty of Vienna was signed, which restored the Bourbons to France, consigned Bonaparte to Elba, and, as it was hoped and believed, gave peace to Europe. Whilst this belief was still unbroken, the English Parliament began to consider subjects of domestic policy. Among other things ministers brought in an Alien Act, which, under the pretence of amending, really

* The following are the names of the minority who adhered to their principles under the discouraging influences of the new Parliament:—

Atherley, A.	Moore, P.	Whitbread
Brand, T.	Ossulton, Lord	
Bennett, H.	Rancliffe, Lord	Burdett, Sir F. } <i>Tellers.</i>
Combe, H. C.	Tavistock, Marquis	Smith, J. }
Gaskell, B.	Western, C. C.	

continued the most stringent provisions of the old law. It was opposed, but ineffectually—only twenty-eight of the extreme opposition voting against it. Whitbread, who had become increasingly active and irritating to the Government, was of course in the minority, and so also was Lord John Russell, who had in 1813 been elected for the family borough of Tavistock.

During the year 1814 a great misfortune befell one of the most able and most popular members of the small Radical party. Lord Cochrane, one of the members for Westminster, had been a brilliant, gallant, and successful naval officer. His professional prospects had been injured by a charge which he brought, but did not succeed in substantiating, against Lord Gambier, who had been associated with him in an attack upon a French force. Retiring, therefore, from the career in which he had done so much to distinguish himself and to serve his country, he devoted himself to politics, joining those members who were striving to increase the popular power in Parliament. He was now charged with having been a party to a stockbroking fraud, and, being found guilty, was sentenced to a fine and to stand in the pillory. The latter part of the sentence was revoked, but he was by vote expelled from the House of Commons. His old constituents immediately re-elected him, and he continued his adhesion to his party. Years after, when Lord Grey was in office, the stigma upon him was formally removed. This was in 1830, when he was restored to his rank in the service; and in 1847 Queen Victoria conferred upon him the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. In 1851 he was vice-admiral of the White, and in 1854 rear-admiral of the United Kingdom, and he died in 1860, full of years and honour. The confidence of the constituents who were faithful to him in his hour of trouble, was as honourable to themselves as to their hero.

Parliament, which had adjourned on the 2nd of December, met again in February, 1815. There were some debates as to the policy which had been adopted by the allies with regard to Norway and Genoa. The consideration of home questions

would then have been proceeded with, but suddenly the whole of Europe was struck with amazement and dismay by the news that Bonaparte had escaped from Elba ; that he had returned to Paris, had been received there as Emperor, and was preparing to recommence the war. Ministers immediately declared their intention to join with their allies in providing for the general and permanent security of Europe. Whitbread opposed the commencement of a new war for the purpose of deciding who should fill the throne of France. Only thirty-two members voted with him, and it was generally felt that it was too late to raise such a question as that. This vital contest once more attracted the attention of the whole of Europe, and no nation had time or inclination to devote to domestic affairs. The struggle was terrible, but brief. It is not within our purpose to trace its course. On the 18th of June it was settled finally—Waterloo was won, Bonaparte was powerless, and Europe at last was really at peace.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM THE CLOSE OF THE WAR TO THE DEATH OF
GEORGE III. (1815-1820).

AT the close of the war the English people had a right to demand that attention should be given to measures for the improvement of their material and social condition, and the increase of their political liberties. They had earned the right by a long and patient endurance of difficulty and distress. They had borne the pressure of the enormous war taxation ; they had filled the ranks of the army, and manned the ships of the navy, under regulations which regarded the privates in either service as nothing better than mere fighting machines ; and they had submitted to a long series of repressive and coercive laws, not indeed without murmurs, but without any attempt at violent resistance. They had done this in order that the hands of the Government, which was responsible for the conduct of a struggle which came at last to be regarded as one for national existence, might not be weakened by internal difficulties and divisions. Now that peace had been secured, it was natural that the people should expect that, by reduction of taxation and by wise commercial legislation, their burdens should be reduced ; and that, in questions affecting their welfare, their own voices should make themselves heard. On all sides the popular expectations were utterly disappointed, the popular demands vehemently resisted.

The first years of the peace were marked by commercial and manufacturing difficulties, and by consequent industrial sufferings which surprised as much as it distressed the public

mind, but which no Government action could prevent.* But, unhappily, legislation had been adopted which artificially intensified and prolonged the distress, and which it took years of labour and agitation to reverse. As soon as the war was supposed to be finished (in 1814), an effort was made to pass a set of corn laws which should prevent the importation of food, and artificially maintain the price of the products of English agriculture. There was no time in that session to accomplish the work, but early in 1815 it was resumed. On the 22nd of February it was proposed that the House should go into committee to consider the question, and this was carried with only seven dissentients, Gore Langton and Sir W. Curtis leading what opposition existed. The fact was, that few of the politicians of the time understood the gross violation of economic law involved in the proposal. The people in the towns, however, became at once aware that the object was to increase the price of their food, and they speedily began to protest by petitions and meetings against the bill. This had some effect, and on the 1st of March the second reading was opposed by thirty members, Whitbread, Wilberforce, Horner, and the old Sir Robert Peel being in the opposition. The public feeling was so strong in London that on the 6th of March, when the bill was again on for consideration, the House of Commons was surrounded by an excited mob, who stopped members and endeavoured to force from them promises to oppose the measure. The military had to be called out to suppress the riots. The promoters of the bill did not intend to lose any time, and on the 10th of March the third reading was carried, by 245 to 77 votes. Thus less than a month was occupied from the first going into a committee of inquiry to the final passing of a measure which did so much to cripple commerce and impoverish the people.

* "That the first year after the restoration of general peace should have been characterized in this country as that of a more widely extended distress than its annals can for a long period exhibit, must doubtless have occasioned as much surprise as disappointment in the greater part of the nation."—"Annual Register," 1816, p. 91.

The commercial and financial pressure, however, reached the monied classes, and their dissatisfaction made itself felt with more effect. Ministers proposed, in the session of 1816, to continue the property tax, and this was strongly resisted. The ordinary strength of the combined opposition was about 130, as was shown by divisions on the Budget and on the military establishments; but on the income tax ministers were defeated by 238 to 201. The Government replied to this by a proposal which proved that it was not by chance that the land-owning class were protected at the cost of the industrial community. Instead of trying to make up the deficiency caused by the repeal of the tax, they immediately proposed to add to it by the removal of the malt tax, and to cover the whole deficit by loans. Even these concessions were not considered sufficient, and Mr. Western, the representative of the landed interest, proposed to increase the stringency of the corn laws, passed only the year before, by rescinding the provision for bonding corn free, and by giving bounties and drawbacks for the encouragement of exportation. In favour of this broad statement of the principle of protection the House declared by unanimously resolving on going into committee for its consideration. The resolutions were not carried into law on this occasion, but it was clearly made known that, in the contest between the poor and the monopolists, the sympathy of what should have been the people's House was against the people. That this was understood by the popular representatives was stated clearly enough by Burdett, who, speaking in the property tax debate on the 27th of February, declared that "he despaired of making the majority of that House, constituted as at present it was, feel for the distress of the country; but he hoped that the sentiment of the people would be so expressed as to compel ministers and, through them, their adherents, to abandon the measure."

It was becoming every day clearer to the popular mind that Burdett's words were true, and that, without a change in the constitution of Parliament, no legislation was possible which should aim at increasing the public welfare, lessening

the public burdens, or increasing the public liberties. It is from this time, therefore, that we date the commencement of the long and earnest agitation, both in and out of Parliament, on behalf of Parliamentary reform.* For a long time the outside agitation was the more active, and in some respects the more important, since it marked the growth of opinion in the nation which at length swept away all opposition. The direct history of this rise and progress of what became known as the Radical movement in the country is not within the scope of our present inquiries, but the manner in which it acted upon Parliament, the sympathy and the antagonism which it aroused, had great and permanent effects upon the relations of political parties, and especially drew with great clearness the line dividing the Radical from the Whig section of Liberals. The distinction began now to be for the first time formally recognized, and men had to find a name by which the new fact could be described. The “middle way of steering” characteristic of the Whig proper was never more manifest than during the ten years which followed the close of the great war.

The Tories in Parliament, the ministers and their followers, knew exactly how they meant to treat the demand which began to be made for constitutional reform. Repression, complete and thorough, was the method they adopted. National discontent was to them not a symptom indicating a disease in the body politic calling for a remedy ; it was itself a disease to be eradicated only by the knife. Freedom of political action was entirely denied ; freedom of speech was restrained within the narrowest limits ; freedom of thought was as far as possible suppressed. The remedy was speedily applied when any popular political activity was displayed. In 1816 Cartwright, Cobbett, Hunt, and others, were carrying on an agitation for

* “Up to the close of 1816, the spirit of Parliamentary reform was seldom evoked in the British Parliament. . . . But the ‘Worthy Pioneer’ got above ground in 1816, and when he was fairly loosened to the open sky, he was not quite so tame and innocent and stupid a spirit as his ordinary supporters and his systematic revilers had been in the habit of believing him to be.”—Martineau’s “History of the Thirty Years’ Peace,” vol. i. pp. 46, 47.

Parliamentary reform, to which Hunt especially was largely attracting public attention, and by which he was arousing manifestations, which were sometimes turbulent, of public opinion. The city of London was then, as it had before been, one of the strongholds of reform, the municipality and the populace being alike attached to the cause. Public meetings were there more easily assembled, and with more difficulty interfered with, than in other parts of the country. The Reform Agitation was clear enough in its action as far as its leaders and organization went. The Reform Clubs and the Hampden Clubs had one main object before them. They were connected with their friends in Parliament, Burdett being chairman of the London Hampden Club. But around them, and sometimes working with them, were other associations less innocent in their objects or less wise in their conduct. It was this connection which furnished an excuse to the Government for the suppression of all attempts at public agitation.

In November, 1816, a meeting had been held in Spa Fields, London, on behalf of Parliamentary reform, and it was attended not only by Hunt, but by two Watsons, and by other leaders of the Spencean Philanthropists, who advocated social changes of a questionable character, and were prepared to support them by violent and criminal actions. There was, however, no disturbance then, and the meeting was adjourned to the 2nd of December. On that day there was a very large assemblage, so large indeed and so divided in its objects that two separate meetings were held. At one of them the Watsons and their followers made violent harangues, displayed arms, and incited their hearers to violence which was to culminate in an attack upon the Tower. Their eloquence was so far effectual that the crowd followed them in a wild rush towards the Tower ; one gunsmith's shop was attacked and robbed, its occupier being shot at and wounded ; and a general scene of violence was for a short time exhibited. One of the rioters, afterwards an informer, and then suspected of being a spy, even mounted one of the Tower walls, and excited the mirth of the soldiers by calling upon them to surrender the fortress.

Nothing further happened, and without much force, but by the exercise of a little judicious firmness on the part of the lord-mayor and a few other gentlemen, the outbreak was suppressed. In the mean time, the other part of the meeting in Spa Fields went on, Hunt declaiming and the people shouting in favour of Parliamentary reform. That the reformers and the rioters were separate bodies was at the time well known. The "Annual Register" for the year says, "It seems certain that this insurrection, as it may be called, had no connection with the political meeting;"* and the lord-mayor who had helped to suppress the riot, within a fortnight afterwards petitioned in favour of Parliamentary reform.

In other parts of the country the same confused, and in many cases conflicting, agitations were being carried on. There were in every district men who, suffering intensely from existing distress, rushed blindly after some immediate remedy such as the Spencean and other social theorists had to offer; and there were others who felt, and were taught by their political leaders, that it was only by the reform of the instrument of legislation that better government could be obtained. It has been found easy, by critics living in later and better times, to judge harshly of both sides of this movement; to look down with an air of superiority on Major Cartwright and others, who saw in reform a possible cure for all the evils of the State; and to condemn as visionaries and revolutionists the advocates of a forcible settlement of social questions. We are able to see that some union of the two processes forms the true basis of political life; that the people must acquaint themselves with the causes of the evils which exist, and with the means by which they can be removed, and must create such a machinery of government as will honestly use the means when they are discovered. At the end of 1816, however, the Radicals were right in making Parliamentary reform their first and greatest object. They were in the presence of a Government to whom changes of any sort were equally detestable, and all who sought for change were equally revo-

* "Annual Register," 1816, p. 191.

lutionists. To Sidmouth and Eldon and Castlereagh the reformer and the Spencean were alike enemies of the State, and a maintenance of existing institutions in all their parts the only hope of safety for the nation.

This theory was laid down very clearly in the Regent's speech by which Parliament was opened on the 28th of January, 1817, the month following that in which the Spa Fields riots had occurred. The Regent said, "I rely with the utmost confidence on your cordial support and co-operation in upholding a system of law and government from which we have derived inestimable advantages, which has enabled us to conclude with unexampled glory a contest whereon depended the best interests of mankind, and which has hitherto been felt by ourselves, as it is acknowledged by other nations, to be the most perfect that has ever fallen to the lot of any people." The idea of positive finality, the repudiation of any principle of life and growth in national affairs, could not be more definitely stated by the most ardent supporter of absolute government. It was against such opponents that the reformers of 1817 had to contend. Nor were these statements in the royal speech intended to be merely declaratory; they were only the preface of a policy of repression and coercion which has never been surpassed. On the 3rd of February, within a week after the meeting of Parliament, a message was sent by the Regent to both Houses, telling them that "he had given orders that there be laid before them papers containing information respecting certain practices, meetings, and combinations in the metropolis and in different parts of the kingdom, evidently calculated to endanger the public tranquillity, and to alienate the affections of his Majesty's subjects from his person and government, and to bring into contempt the whole system of our laws and constitution."

This message and the papers by which it was accompanied were referred by both Houses to committees, which were to sit and examine and deliberate in secret. The reports were such as might have been expected. The committee of the Lords said that the evidence submitted to them

“leaves no doubt in our minds that a traitorous conspiracy has been formed in the metropolis for the purpose of overthrowing, by means of a general insurrection, the established government, laws, and constitution of the kingdom, and of effecting a general plunder and division of property.” They also declared that all this was being done “under pretence of Parliamentary reform.” The Commons’ report stated that “attempts have been made, in various parts of the country, as well as in the metropolis, to take advantage of the distress in which the labouring and manufacturing classes of the community are at present involved, to induce them to look for immediate relief, not only in a scheme of Parliamentary reform on the plan of universal suffrage and annual election, but in a total overthrow of all existing establishments, and in a division of the landed and extinction of the funded property of the country.” Both committees called for further provisions for the preservation of peace and property against dangers which they believed that the utmost vigilance of Government, under the existing laws, had been found inadequate to prevent. Ministers lost no time in submitting their remedy for the existing evils. More coercion, more repression, to prevent, if possible, any independent thought on social and political questions, and, at all events, to proscribe any expression of opinion; that was their plan. On the 24th of February a bill to suspend Habeas Corpus was introduced in the House of Lords; and on the same day Lord Castlereagh, in the Commons, asked leave to bring in a bill for preventing seditious meetings. These were two of the infamous Acts by which for a time public liberty was destroyed in England.

The opposition of the Whigs to these measures was half-hearted. They spoke and voted, indeed, against the suspension of Habeas Corpus; but, on a division, leave to bring in the Seditious Meetings Bill was given by 190 to 14.* The

* The following are the names of the minority given in Hansard:—

Aubrey, Sir John	Hughes, Col.	Waldegrave, Hon. W.
Brand, T.	Ossulton, Lord	Webb, Edward
Ferguson, Sir R.	Rancliffe, Lord	
Fitzgerald, Rt. Hon. T.	Russell, Lord W.	Bennett, H. }
Folkestone, Lord	Smith, Wm.	Burdett, Sir F. }
Gordon, R.	Tavistock, Lord	<i>Tellers.</i>

Whigs were not absent, although they did not vote ; for in the debate Ponsonby and Brougham and Romilly all spoke against the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. To have a full idea of what this abstention meant, we must see what the bill really was. Its objects were—

1. To prevent public meetings, except those called by county or borough authorities or on requisition of seven householders—in the latter case subject to stringent regulations.

2. To prevent the existence of debating societies, lecture-rooms, reading-rooms, etc., for admission to which money was received.

3. To declare unlawful all societies that had delegates or missionaries for the purpose of confirming others in the principles they professed.

4. To suppress a particular society calling themselves the Spenceans or Spencean Philanthropists.

Every one of those instruments for political education which we now value so highly and use so constantly, every means by which sound opinion could be formed, as well as every method by which it could express itself to the legislature and the Government, were thus ruthlessly put down by a bill against the introduction of which only sixteen members could be induced to vote. Ministers were not content with the powers—enormous as they were—which Parliament conferred ; they assumed and delegated to the most irresponsible instruments of the executive still more arbitrary authority. On the 27th of March the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, addressed a circular letter to the lords-lieutenant of counties, in which he urged the importance of preventing the circulation of blasphemous and seditious publications ; and informed them that he had ascertained that the law officers of the Crown were of opinion that a justice of the peace might issue a warrant to apprehend any person charged on oath with the publication of a blasphemous or seditious libel, and compel him to give bail to answer the charge. The circular further declared that the vendors of pamphlets or

tracts were within the Hawkers and Pedlars Acts, and should be dealt with accordingly if found selling such things without a licence. That the conduct of the Government in issuing this circular was unconstitutional was clearly proved. The case was plainly put by Romilly when he brought the subject before the House of Commons on the 25th of June. "By the constitution of this country," he said, "there are only two modes in which the law in matters of doubt can be declared—one is by the whole legislature by a declaratory statute; the other by the decisions of the judges upon points which have come judicially before them. It has at all times been thought of the utmost importance to prevent the law from being in any other way declared, and particularly to guard against the Crown presuming to declare it. Yet, he went on to say, "the circular resting on the opinion of the law officers had declared the law on a point which was before doubtful, and the Secretary of State, assisted by such advice as he could command, had thus assumed the functions of legislation."

Under these exceptional laws, and in the spirit which dictated Sidmouth's circular, the summer and autumn of 1817 were marked by a systematic course of oppression and coercion, rarely, if ever, equalled in this country. Political writers were harried by constant prosecutions; the distressed artisans were goaded, and in many cases absolutely tempted by Government spies, into acts of violence, which, although they were never really dangerous, formed the excuse for further repression. The march of the Blanketeers and the so-called risings at Derby and Nottingham tended to increase the terror from which the Government agents profited, and were used as arguments against any concessions to popular demands. The people were indeed in a painful position. All regular and constitutional agitation was proscribed, and every effort to resist the oppression was magnified in its proportions and punished with a terrible severity. Yet it was under this reign of terror that the feeling in favour of Parliamentary reform was strengthened and extended, promoted by the sense that there were no other means by which the wants of

the people could ensure attention, much less obtain redress. That the fear was exaggerated and much of the repressive action unnecessary, was admitted even by the partisans of ministers themselves. Parliament met on the 27th of January, 1818, and immediately both Houses were invited again to elect secret committees to consider the proceedings which had taken place in the country. These inquiries were intended to justify the application by the Government for an Act of Indemnity to cover the acts of themselves and their agents during the past year. The report of the Committee of the Lords, presented on the 23rd of February, contained one passage which was alone sufficient to vindicate the patience and law-abiding character of the people and the unnecessary nature of the methods which had been pursued. "The committee," it said, "have the satisfaction of delivering it as their decided opinion, that not only in the country in general, but in those districts where the designs of the disaffected were most actively and unremittingly pursued, the great body of the people have remained untainted, even during the periods of the greatest internal difficulty and distress."

There was no reason, therefore, even on the showing of ministers, why the law suspending the operation of the Habeas Corpus Act should not be repealed, and this was done. In the House of Commons repeated petitions were presented from persons who had suffered imprisonment during the suspension, and on the 17th of February Lord Folkestone moved that a Committee be appointed to inquire into the truth of the allegations, but was defeated by 167 votes to 58. There were also resolutions submitted for inquiry into the conduct of spies and informers, but these were also rejected by large majorities.

On the 9th of March the Attorney-General introduced an Indemnity Bill, intended to meet all such attacks. In his speech he made it clear that, by their repressive policy, ministers aimed not only at the suppression of violence, but at the prevention or limitation of the quietest agitation for

political purposes outside a line which they themselves thought proper to draw. Speaking of the movement in favour of Parliamentary reform, he said, "In his view those who sought such objects (universal suffrage and annual Parliaments) must be understood to seek revolution, for he maintained that such objects were incompatible with the existence of the British Constitution of which neither annually elected Parliaments nor universal suffrage ever formed any part; nay, he was prepared to maintain that the establishment of such a system was inconsistent with the stability of any constitution whatever—that, in fact, it could not last for one year in any country that desired the possession of a regular government." On the day following Sir Francis Burdett gave a practical reply to this dictum by presenting a petition from Warrington, praying for annual Parliaments and universal suffrage.

It was at this time, when the policy of coercion was in full operation, and when ministers not only put down all attempts at reform, and all means of political discussion, but when they even declared that to agitate for constitutional change was treasonable, that the Whigs chose to desert the cause of Parliamentary reform, and thereby accentuated the differences between themselves and the Radicals in Parliament. The commotions which took place in 1817, which the committee of the Lords declared did not affect the great body of the people, alarmed the members of the privileged and propertied class in both political parties, and the Whigs had not sufficient faith in their countrymen to remain true to their cause under circumstances of trial and excitement. Wingrove Cooke says, "Since the rise of the democratic faction, the Whigs have owed all their reverses, as a party, to their timidity of the people."* They never showed this timidity more than at the time under consideration. The secession began in 1817, writing under which date Harriet Martineau says, "From this year we may date the retrogression of the course of Parliamentary reform, which continued to go back, or stand still, as long as the

* "History of Parties," vol. iii. p. 297.

middle classes were afraid of its agitation." * There was not much sign of the division during the remainder of that Parliament, but after the dissolution on the 18th of June, 1818, it soon became manifest.

From the election of the new Parliament, which met on the 14th of January, 1819, the word *Whig* ceased to be considered by any one as synonymous with *Liberal*. There were two sections of the party working together whenever the Whigs would make a forward movement, but avowedly recognizing different standards of policy, and advocating different rates of progress. So far as the respectabilities and gentilities of the time could effect it, Radicalism was put under a ban. Its leaders were demagogues, its followers wild democrats; every term which could be applied to it was in turn made one of reproach. We have not yet outgrown the practice which was then established, and which constitutional historians and royal biographers have caught from political opponents. During the early part of the session some divisions were taken which tested the relative strength of parties. There is no record which will show how many members were distinctly Radical. One work † has been devoted to the purpose of ascertaining the political character of all candidates, but full materials for the purpose were not available, and the particulars for all years before 1832 are quite useless. Thus, for the election in 1818 the only Radicals recorded are Daniel Whittle Harvey, who sat for Colchester, and Sir R. T. Wilson, member for Southwark; even Sir Francis Burdett being entered as a Whig.

On the 3rd of February a bill was introduced called the Westminster Hustings Bill, to relieve the high bailiff of that city from the costs of elections. It was opposed by Burdett, but not on the broad grounds that candidates ought not to bear the charges, and the division list is therefore not very important. Ten members, besides his fellow-teller, supported him, and the second reading was carried, thirty-two voting

* "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. i. p. 152.

† "The Parliaments of England from the first of George I. to the Present Time," by Henry Stooks Smith, three vols., 1844-50.

for it.* The list is mainly interesting from its containing the names of two men who afterwards took prominent positions in the Radical lines—D. W. Harvey, who had entered Parliament for the first time; and Joseph Hume, who had been returned in 1812 as a Tory, but who now sat for Aberdeen as a Liberal. The broader question between ministers and opposition was raised on the 18th of May, by Tierney's proposal for a committee on the state of the nation. It was avowedly a motion of want of confidence, and Whigs and Radicals united in its support. The result was largely in favour of the Government, the numbers being 178 for, and 357 against, Tierney's resolution. The position which the Radicals intended to take as representing and defending the interests of the body of the people was illustrated on the 22nd of June, when Hume presented a petition from artisans for the repeal of the laws against combinations of workmen. In submitting the petition, he said, "He would leave it to the feelings of every gentleman present whether it was just to give to the rich master the power of combining against the journeyman, and to prevent the latter, if he attempted to procure what he considered to be a fair remuneration for his labour." The labourer was to be made aware that his voice could be heard in Parliament, and he naturally became the more anxious for a reform which would give increased power and efficiency to his friends.

It was on the 1st of July that the first open protest was made by the Whigs of their difference with the Radicals on the subject of reform. On that day the Marquis of Tavistock, who had shown himself one of the most Liberal members of his party, presented to the House of Commons a petition from Liverpool. In making the presentation, he said, "He regretted to say that he had lately had but too many opportunities of witnessing the dissensions which prevailed among

* The following are the names of the ten :—

Barnett, J.
Harvey, D. W.
Hume, Joseph
Lawson, M.

Ommaney, F. M.
Protheroe, E.
Rancliffe, Lord
Sebright, Sir J.

Wellesley, W. P. T. L.
Williams, W.
Burdett, Sir F. } *Tellers.*
Wilson, Sir R. }

those who advocated the cause of Parliamentary reform. Some were moderate reformers, while others were Radical reformers, and wished nothing less than such reform as would be totally destructive of the Constitution. He heartily disapproved of all those wild, impracticable theories which had lately been broached."

Sir F. Burdett then moved—"That early in the next session of Parliament this House will take into consideration the state of the representation," and he at once dealt with the Whig opposition. Speaking of the late time at which he had brought forward his resolution, he said, "Had I stirred this question sooner, it might have been attributed to me that I had thrown the apple of discord amongst that party denominating themselves Whigs, maliciously and advisedly, with a view of defeating all those rational and moderate plans of reform, as they are falsely called, of which they are the champions. Every failure might have been attributed to me, and I might have been exposed to accusation, on account not only of what they had left undone, but also of what the ministers had done. Not only might have been attributed to me the failure of schemes of economy and retrenchment, but likewise the imposition of the three millions of new taxes on the public."

Lord John Russell took up the challenge, and in a very short speech manifested that feeling of timidity, and that distrust of public opinion, which have counterbalanced in the minds of the people the devotion to moderate and careful reforms which the Whigs always professed. He said, "He wished to state distinctly that he did not agree with those who opposed all and every system of reform. He agreed in the propriety of disfranchising such boroughs as were notoriously corrupt, and would give his consent to any measure that would restrict the duration of Parliament to three years. He could not, however, pledge himself to support a measure that went the length of proposing an inquiry into the general state of the representation, because such an inquiry was calculated to throw a slur upon the represen-

tation of the country, and to fill the minds of the people with vague and indefinite alarms. The hon. baronet had complained that the reformers were represented to be wild and visionary theorists, and had called upon the House to state where those wild and visionary reformers were to be found. If the hon. baronet did not know where to find them, he would refer him to those persons who had advised him during the last session to bring forward his celebrated motion for annual Parliaments and universal suffrage." That this was no feeling peculiar to Lord John and his immediate connections was shown in the following session, when, in moving an amendment to the address, Tierney,* the acknowledged leader of the opposition, spoke as follows:—"With regard to plans of reform, it was unfortunately too true that some men in this country entertained the strangest and most extravagant notions of Parliamentary reform; and here he begged to be understood to be as much an enemy as any man to what were called the Radical leaders, he was as willing as any man to mark, in the strongest terms, his contempt of their understanding, his disgust at their proceedings, and his jealousy of their objects. . . . The right hon. gentlemen who were in office were unpopular with the Radicals, but the unfortunate Whigs who had long left office came in for a sort of *post obit* of unpopularity."

It was the policy of the Whig leaders, clearly enough expressed in these speeches, to stigmatize the Radicals as ignorant and violent people, altogether low and impracticable. This doctrine was acceptable enough to the landowners, the squires, the borough-owners, on both sides the then existing House of Commons. The attacks of the Whigs were, however, to be compensated for by the formation, which was at the very time going on, of a school of political and moral philosophy, small in numbers, but of great authority derived from their learning, their ability, and their courage. The so-called Philosophical Radicals, following the methods and sharing the conclusions of Bentham, performed the duty of

* On the 23rd of November, 1819.

proving that the political reforms, to which the instincts of a suffering and oppressed people looked for relief, were not the mere creations of disaffected ignorance, but were founded on great moral and social laws, and were supported by men to whom scientific method and historical research were alike familiar. The effect of the teachings of Bentham and Mill, of Grote and Molesworth, did not, until a later period, produce any direct effect upon the constitution or proceedings of Parliament ; but it soon became impossible to dismiss their arguments with the lofty scorn which had been used towards Cartwright and Hunt: and the Tierneys of the future would have been laughed at if they had expressed their "contempt of the understanding" of the historians of India and of Greece. One important characteristic of the early teaching of Bentham was the persistence with which he kept in view the union and interdependence of the objects of government and the machinery by which they were to be effected. When the promotion of the happiness of the greatest number was realized—not as a vague theory, but as a vital principle—as the end of government, it was the easier to see that it was absurd, as well as unjust, to exclude from the discussion of aims and methods the bulk of the people whose happiness was immediately concerned.

The union of ends and means in the popular demonstration was natural. It was the pressure of distress, and the absence of any attempt at relief by the existing Government, which forced the masses of the people to ask for some constitutional reform. The most extreme demands, those for universal suffrage and annual Parliaments, had been urged years ago by Richmond and Fox, the predecessors of the very Whigs who were now horrified at their mention. But they were then advanced as theories which their professors, when in power, never thought of carrying into practice ; they were now claimed as the only means of help by the millions of over-burdened and suffering people. At Manchester, and other places where the distress was most keenly felt, every political meeting exhibited banners on which "No corn laws"

and “Universal suffrage” were inscribed side by side. It has been the custom to sneer at these men for blindly seeking reform as a mechanical cure for the evils under which they laboured, but, in fact, they knew that some change was necessary before their grievances could even be listened to, much less remedied.

Burdett, and several of the speakers who supported his resolution on the 1st of July, had warned the House of Commons that to refuse even to take into future consideration the question of reform would be looked upon by the people as a proof that they had nothing to expect from the existing forms of government, and that they might therefore be driven into violent agitation. These warnings were too quickly justified. Some of the great unrepresented towns took upon themselves the right of electing representatives, which the makers and the administrators of the law denied them. Birmingham was the first place where this action was taken. On the 12th of July, the day before Parliament was prorogued, a meeting was held at Newhall Hill, at which at least 15,000 persons were present, and it was resolved to elect a “Legislatorial attorney and representative” for the town. The movers stated that the issuing of a writ being compulsory, they had not awaited the form of the mandate, but anticipated the right. The privilege constitutionally belonged to them, and they were fulfilling the duty of good subjects in proceeding to advise the sovereign by their representative. Sir Charles Wolseley was then elected, according to regular form, by an immense show of hands, and amid the thundering acclamations of the concurring multitude. A remonstrance was read, which the newly elected member was to present to Parliament, and a deputation was appointed to carry to him the instructions of his constituents. Sir Charles, in return, pledged himself to claim his seat in the House of Commons.* This proceeding, whilst it encouraged the reformers in other towns to take similar action, alarmed the Government, and determined them to take strong measures to put a stop to the agitation. Leeds, at a meeting held a few

* “Annual Register,” 1819, pp. 104, 105.

days later, resolved that as soon as an eligible person could be found an election should take place. The Ministry quickly replied. On the 19th of July Sir Charles Wolseley, the elected representative of Birmingham, was arrested at his residence, Wolseley Park, Staffordshire, carried to Knutsford, and compelled to give bail for his appearance to answer for seditious words spoken by him at a public meeting at Stockport. A great meeting, under the presidency of Hunt, was held in Smithfield, London, on the 21st, which occasioned great alarm to the authorities, but it went off with peacefulness and order. At this meeting a man named Harrison was arrested for words used at the same Stockport meeting where Wolseley had spoken. The officer who had arrested both Wolseley and Harrison was attacked by a mob when he reached Stockport, and was wounded by a pistol-shot. Other arrests were made, and circular letters and proclamations were issued by the Government, prohibiting seditious meetings, and warning lords-lieutenant and magistrates to take prompt and effective measures for the preservation of public tranquillity; and, as a measure of precaution, directions were to be given to the yeomanry of the counties to hold themselves in readiness.

The opposing forces—the excitement of the people and the determined repression of the Government—were sure to come into collision. The catastrophe occurred at Manchester, attended by circumstances which have made it memorable in English political history. A meeting was announced to be held in St. Peter's Field, on the 16th of August, for the purpose of electing a representative, and of adopting Major Cartwright's plan of Parliamentary reform. Hunt was to take the chair, and it was supposed that he would be chosen as the representative. The whole neighbourhood was excited, and an enormously large attendance was expected. The authorities acted in a manner which made a violent scene inevitable. A committee of county magistrates had been sitting for some days, deliberating on the steps to be taken, and they resolved at last not to prevent the meeting, but, when it was assembled, to direct the arrest of the leaders and prevent the transaction

of any business. Police, special constables, yeomanry, and soldiers were prepared for the suppression of any resistance and for the dispersion of the meeting. On the fatal day vast numbers assembled ; deputations from all the surrounding districts marched into the town, with bands of music at their head, and displaying banners and caps of liberty. It was estimated that 80,000 persons were present. It was through this dense mass of human beings that the officers who were to arrest the leaders had to try and penetrate. The task was impossible. The yeomanry endeavoured to assist and to reach the hustings, but they became isolated, wedged in among the crowd, and powerless. Then the Hussars were ordered to charge, and dashed in, sabres in hand, among the multitude. There was no proof, scarcely any pretence, that there had been any manifestation of violence or of opposition on the part of the meeting ; the physical impossibility of executing the warrants formed the only excuse for the massacre which followed. Bamford, the author of the “*Life of a Radical*,” who was present, and was afterwards arrested and punished for taking part in the meeting, gives a graphic account of the scene which followed the order to the soldiers to charge the defenceless mob. “The cavalry were in confusion. They evidently could not, with all the weight of man and horse, penetrate that compact mass of human beings, and their sabres were plied to hew a way through naked up-held hands and defenceless heads ; and then chopped limbs and wound-gaping skulls were seen, and groans and cries were mingled with the din of that horrid confusion.” There were five or six people killed, and the “*Annual Register*” says that the whole number of persons injured amounted to between three and four hundred. The thing is too horrible to dwell upon : this reply of a strong Government to the cry of a suffering people met to pray for relief and for reform. Ministers were not afraid to think of what they had done, for the return of a despatch brought to Sir John Byng, commander of the district, a letter from Sidmouth, stating that his lordship had laid before the Prince Regent a letter addressed to himself, and that it

was with great satisfaction that he obeyed the commands of his Royal Highness by requesting that he would express to Lieut.-Col. L'Estrange, and to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates who served under his command at Manchester on the 16th of August, his Royal Highness's high approbation of the exemplary manner in which they assisted and supported the civil power of the county palatine of Lancaster on that day.* This was the sort of royal approval which it was usual to address to troops who had distinguished themselves by bold and brilliant services in war, and it was now used to men who had ridden fully armed into a mass of unresisting English citizens. Nowhere was there any official expression of sympathy with the people who had suffered, or of regret that the massacre had occurred.

There was a cry of indignation throughout the country when the Manchester tragedy became known. If open sedition or rebellion had been contemplated or possible, it would have been attempted then. But the public mind, although excited, had no turn towards violence; where it was allowed orderly expression, it spoke in peace. At Paisley, the authorities unwisely attempting to prevent a meeting, a tumult took place, and the town was kept in an uproar for two or three days. At Leeds and Birmingham and other towns, meetings were held to denounce the conduct of the Government, and although there was strong language used, there was no riot or disturbance. The country waited to see how the ministers would meet the new crisis which they were called upon to face

They met it in the old fashion. Sidmouth and Castle-reagh and Eldon had but one remedy for every political evil, but one reply to every popular demand. Repression and ever more repression, that was their only resource. Parliament was called to an autumnal sitting, and met on the 23rd of November. The Regent's speech explained that the unusual period of the meeting was the consequence of seditious parties, and declared that "a spirit is now fully

* "Annual Register," 1819, p. 107.

manifested, utterly hostile to the Constitution of this country, and aiming not only at the change of those political institutions which have hitherto constituted the pride and security of this country, but the subversion of the rights of property and of all order in society. I have given directions that the necessary information on this subject shall be laid before you; and I feel it to be my indispensable duty to press on your immediate attention the consideration of such measures as may be requisite for the counteraction and suppression of a system which, if not effectually checked, must bring confusion and ruin on the country." The gentlemen of the House of Commons were then informed that "the necessity of affording protection to the lives and property of his Majesty's loyal subjects has compelled me to make some addition to our military force." It was a new thing, even in the worst times of English politics, to increase the army for the preservation of domestic peace.

The debates on the address turned, of course, upon the Manchester meeting and its consequences. Parliament met on the 23rd of November, and on that day the opposition in both Houses moved amendments asking for an official inquiry into the case, and in both it was urged that reform and conciliation ought to take the place of mere coercion and repression. In the House of Lords Earl Grey said, "He had heard strong observations on the progress of sedition and treason, and on the necessity of adopting measures of coercion calculated to avert the danger which threatened the country; but he had as yet heard no recommendation to avert the danger by relieving the people from some part of the heavy burdens which oppressed them. It was by conciliation, by a reduction of the enormous public expenditure which weighed down the country, and by a system of timely reform and economy, that the threatened danger should be met." In the other House the Marquis of Tavistock said, "With respect to the difficulties which threatened the country, he thought they might be overcome, and the breach might be healed, if they did not drive the people to despair by refusing inquiry. He should

conciliate them by granting at least some step towards reform. So long as that House was constituted as at present it was, it could not, it ought not to, possess the confidence of the people." The debate in the Commons lasted over two evenings, those of the 23rd and 24th of November, and was particularly brilliant. It has been the custom to regard Burdett as a mere commonplace declaimer, but this was not the opinion entertained of him at the time, as an observation made by Sir Fowell Buxton about this very discussion will show. He says, "We have had a wonderful debate; really it has raised my idea of the capacity and ingenuity of the human mind. All the leaders spoke, and almost all outdid themselves; but Burdett stands first. His speech was absolutely the finest and the clearest and the fairest display of masterly understanding that ever I heard; and, with shame I ought to confess it, he did not utter a sentence to which I could not agree. Canning was second; if there be any difference between eloquence and sense, this was the difference between him and Burdett." *

The eloquence was of little avail; the Tories were firm, and even some of the Whigs went with them, and ministers had a majority of 381 to 150, and no protest availed to prevent them from proceeding vigorously with the work of repression. They brought in and carried the infamous Six Acts, by which liberty of speech, liberty of the press, and liberty of meeting were practically destroyed, so far as legislature could effect that purpose.† The Whig leaders opposed these oppressive

* "Memoirs," edited by his son, p. 79. This tribute is the more striking because its author had no political sympathy with Burdett. In a letter to his uncle, C. Buxton, written at the same date, he says, "I quite agree with you in reprobating the Radicals. I am persuaded that their object is the subversion of religion and the Constitution, and I shall be happy to vote for any measure by which the exertions of their leaders may be suppressed" (Ibid., p. 82). His great friend Gurney had just written to him, "Do not let thy independence of all party be the means of leading thee away from *sound Whiggism*" (Ibid., p. 79).

† The Six Acts were—

1. An Act to prevent delay in the administration of justice in cases of misdemeanour.
2. An Act to prevent the training of persons to the use of arms, etc.
3. An Act for the more effectual prevention and punishment of blasphemous and seditious libels.

measures, and they began to speak once more, although in guarded terms, of the necessity for Parliamentary reform. They were beginning to learn that it was impossible for them to make any impression upon Parliament as then constituted. The ministers on their side did not hesitate to defy them. During the recess Earl Fitzwilliam had been dismissed from the office of Lord-Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire for having signed a requisition for, and attended, a reform meeting; and in a debate on a motion for a committee in the House of Commons on the 30th of November, Castlereagh made a violent attack upon the whole body of the Whigs, which astonished as much as it annoyed them. They could not but be aware that to destroy the Tory supremacy some change must be made in the representative system, and, at the same time, that no change would be acceptable to the class in whose hands that system placed the power of government. Moderate reformers were as hateful as extensive ones to the men who would lose by any reform whatever. The obstacle thus formed could be broken down only by means of popular support, and for this none of the Whigs could compete with the Radicals, and many of them would have objected to making the attempt. Mr. Rush, the American minister, described the situation in the statement that "the Whigs have lost their strong ground, the reformers having taken it from under them. They are a party of leaders with no rank and file; accomplished men, but as aristocratic as the Tories."* They were, in fact, still jealous of the Radicals; still anxious to try if, by opening a kind of middle way, they could obtain a leadership which would not involve too rapid a march or too extensive operations.

Further evidence on both these points was given during

4. An Act for the seizure and detention of arms (authorizing search by day or night).

5. An Act to subject certain publications to the duties of stamps upon newspapers, and to make other regulations for restraining the abuses arising from the publication of blasphemous and seditious libels.

6. An Act for more effectually preventing seditious meetings and assemblies.

* "Residence at the Court of London," vol. i. p. 362.

this session. On the 30th of November the Marquis of Lansdowne moved in the House of Lords for a committee to inquire into the state of the country, and in supporting that motion Lord Grey said, "Could he be suspected of any attachment to the principles of the Radical reformers? Was he not aware that those persons called Radical reformers were decided enemies to the Whigs; that he himself was pointed out by some as their greatest, if not their principal, enemy?" We have seen what the amount of excitement was in the country, and the extent of reform which the public feeling demanded; we have seen also the answer which the Tory Government gave to the popular request; and we have now to see what the Whigs were prepared to offer. On the 14th of December Lord John Russell proposed his resolutions. They were four in number, and were to the following effect:

1. Boroughs in which gross and notorious bribery and corruption were proved to prevail, to be disfranchised; those electors not guilty to have votes for the county in which the boroughs were situated.

2. Members so taken away to be given to great towns having not less than 15,000 population, or to the largest counties.

3. That it was the duty of the House to consider of further means to detect and prevent corruption.

4. That Grampound should be at once disfranchised.

These very moderate proposals were introduced in a speech of at least equal moderation. "It is impossible," said Lord John, "not to see that there are two parties dividing the country, both greatly exasperated, and both going to extremes; the one making unlimited demands, and the other meeting them with total and peremptory denial; the one ready to encounter any hazard for unknown benefits, the other ready to sacrifice for present security those privileges which our ancestors thought cheaply purchased with their blood." Whatever may have been the effect upon public feeling, neither the speech nor the resolutions alarmed the Government. Lord Castlereagh complimented the speaker upon the tone

of his remarks, and had no violent opposition to offer; he accepted, indeed, the only practical suggestion—the disfranchisement of Grampound, although he was not quite prepared to say to what constituency the members should be transferred. Lord John, on his part, was touched by the kindness and courtesy of the minister, and withdrew his resolutions, giving notice of his intention to move for leave to bring in a bill to disfranchise Grampound. This was indeed a weak and contemptible solution of a great political problem. Here there was a nation which, in the opinion of the Whigs themselves, was frightfully misgoverned; its resources being wasted, and its liberties undermined; the constitution under which it was governed so defective that the representative House itself, as the Marquis of Tavistock declared, “could not, and ought not to, possess the confidence of the people.” With these facts the mass of the people were deeply impressed, and they called, with a vehemence which ministers thought bordered upon revolution, for some thorough reform which should give them an effective voice in the government of the country. Under such critical conditions, and in response to so earnest an appeal, the party which assumed to be the protectors of freedom and the champions of reform proposed to disfranchise one corrupt borough, and to give its members to some constituency not yet selected. There is little cause for wonder that the people should not accept such an offer, and that they should distrust the party by which it was made. The Whigs had yet to be thoroughly convinced that without the support of popular enthusiasm no progress of any kind was possible, and that such a feeling could only be aroused by men who had sufficient love for liberty, and sufficient faith in the people, to propose a scheme which should give to the popular element a substantial power in the Constitution. The lesson was to be rapidly learned, but in the mean time the Radicals had to go on, in spite of the hatred and persecution of the Tories, and the coolness and contempt of the Whigs, with their great work of educating public opinion and giving direction and energy to its expres-

sion. This continued for many a year, both before and after the first instalment of reform was obtained, to be the task which they had to perform, leaving the honour and the profit of reaping the harvest which they had sown to be claimed by the old political organizations, as one or other of them should in turn become convinced that abuses could no longer be maintained, and that reforms could be no longer delayed.

The Parliament in which these events had taken place was not destined to exist much longer ; but before it resolved on the adjournment which preceded its dissolution one division took place, which is remarkable as being the first introduction into any modern European legislature of the question of Socialism, which has recently attained such great importance. Robert Owen had been for some time carrying on at Lanark his great experiment in communism. His attempt had attracted much attention, which it deserved as an effort to promote the social independence, the material welfare, and the intellectual culture of the people. On the 16th of December Sir W. De Crespigny, one of the members for Southampton, moved for a committee to "inquire into the plan of Mr. Owen for ameliorating the condition of the lower classes." There was a short debate, conducted with good feeling and temper, but of course the proposal was rejected.* It is worth noticing that Ricardo, the politico-economist, was in the minority. He voted for the committee, not because he approved of Owen's principles, but because he thought an experiment so serious and important ought to be fairly and fully examined.

Parliament was on the 29th of December adjourned to

* The numbers were—for 16, against 141. The following are the names of the minority :—

Aubrey, Sir J.	Lamb, Hon. G.	Waithman, Alderman
Barnett, J.	Pringle, J.	Wood, Alderman
Compton, S.	Rancliffe, Lord	
Gaskell, B.	Ricardo, D.	Crespigny, Sir W. De }
Graham, S.	Palmer, J.	Maxwell, John } <i>Tellers.</i>
Harvey, D. W.	Sinclair, G.	

the 15th of February, 1820, but it was destined to meet much earlier. On the 29th of January George III. died at Windsor, ending in sorrow and gloom a reign which had begun with the brightest promises of happiness and success. The friends and the hopes of his early life had alike passed away, and the old King had become rather a memory than an active reality before the grave closed over him. The memory was associated in the minds of his subjects with feelings of personal affection; but the political ideal for which he had striven, that of a King reigning supreme over an obedient Parliament by the help of dependent ministers, seemed a very mockery in the presence of the poor wreck, stricken in mind and body, in whose name the business of his country had for years past been conducted. Of the ambitions and the struggles of the throne, of the affections and the sorrows of the home, there were none that he now could feel or care for.

“ Oh, let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.”

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM THE DEATH OF GEORGE III. TO THE DEATH OF
CASTLEREAGH (1820-1822).

THE death of the old King seemed at first to make little difference either to the state of parties in England or to the conduct and progress of political affairs. He had long been withdrawn from all personal share or interest in public events. The son who now succeeded him had been, as Byron said in the bitterest of his verses, "in all but name a king." With him ministers had consulted, by him State documents were signed and State ceremonial conducted; why, then, should not the old policy be carried out by the same Ministry, under the same authority? For some time there was no change. When the Houses of Parliament met, which they did on the 30th of January, they had to swear allegiance to the new King, and this formality being completed, they received an address from George IV. instead of one from the Prince Regent. But the speech directly declared that there was to be no alteration in the policy which had been justified by "the experience of the past," and the old advisers of the Crown retained their power. The constituencies, as they then existed, were equally averse to change, and at the ensuing election the great Conservative ministerial majority was maintained.

Yet, in spite of all these appearances, the death of George III. had a great effect upon the course of English events, which, if not immediate, was not very long deferred. The removal of the personal influence of the monarch was in itself an important matter. That influence had survived the retire-

ment of the King from any actual share in the government of the country, or in the interests, duties, and affections of ordinary human life ; but it remained a power impressed both on the traditions and modes of thought of the governing classes, and on the feelings and sympathies of the people generally. The habit of reckoning the opinion of the King as the first element in the constitution of a policy, or in the decision of any great question, had grown with the growth of the existing generation of politicians and statesmen. The unbending determination—call it obstinacy or firmness as we may—which had broken up the old Whig domination, had bent the power and genius of both the Pitts to its purpose, and had even in its decline conquered the pride of Grenville,—had become recognized by all possible ministers as a natural power in the State. The personal affection which his undoubted singleness of purpose and simplicity of life had won from the people would have revolted from any sudden change of policy which it was known would shock and pain the old sovereign if he had retained, or would distress him if he should recover, his mental powers. The most striking instance of the repression which this feeling produced upon the minds and the actions of politicians was the course taken with regard to the Catholic question. There were men in the Tory party itself who, like Canning, shared the opinion of their old leader Pitt, that some concession should be made to the claims which had been recognized in the negotiations which preceded the passing of the Act of Union ; yet every one knew that so long as the old King lived no progress would be made or even seriously attempted.

Towards the new King there were no such feelings of consideration and affection. The sentiment of personal loyalty, always an important element in English politics, remained, and had been increased by the events of a reign extending over more than fifty years, during which the monarch had constantly asserted and maintained an actively paramount influence in the State. In the course of that reign an entire generation had grown up, had formed its opinions,

and had acquired its social habits and its political tendencies. The character of George IV. soon began to have an effect upon these feelings, and thereby upon the course of political life in the country. It could not, indeed, immediately affect the relations of parties in Parliament, for the classes and the interests which commanded the majorities in both Houses were not altered by the change of sovereign. The Tory supremacy remained intact, and the first practical consequence of the accession of a sovereign would naturally manifest itself in the release of some members of that party from the restraint under which they were held by respect for the opinions and prejudices of George III. This was seen when the Catholic question again came up for discussion ; but there was one subject which forced itself at once on public attention, and did much to destroy any feeling of personal affection or even respect for the new King.

This subject was the relation of George IV. with his wife, and the treatment by monarch and ministers of the unhappy Queen Caroline. The history of this unfortunate woman has to be touched upon here only as it affects the action and position of the several Parliamentary parties, and it must be said that little to the credit of either of the two old political sections is to be found in the record. Tories and Whigs seem in turn to have taken up and dropped the cause of the Princess, according as they were in office or in opposition, and as a means of gaining either court favour or popular support. In 1806, when Fox and Grenville were in power, they consented to the issue of a commission, under which the servants of Caroline were examined without previous notice, either to them or to their mistress. At that time Perceval, the typical Tory, was acting for the Princess, and Eldon himself was one of her advisers. When in 1814 she, in opposition to the wishes of her friends, determined to go abroad, the Tories held office, with Eldon as Lord Chancellor, and they issued the Secret Commission which followed the Princess, and got together the scandalous evidence which, whether it was true or false, covered its collectors and publishers with disgrace, and shocked

the moral sense of the nation. When her husband came to the throne, it was evident that something definite would have to be done with regard to the position of the woman who was now Queen Consort of England. The King wished his ministers to promise at once to obtain for him a divorce—a demand to which they declined to accede, unless the Queen should come to England to claim her position in the royal court. They yielded, however, so far as to leave her name out of the Liturgy, an insult which forced her to take that very step of returning from abroad, which they were so anxious to prevent.

In the struggle that followed, the ministers tried in vain to crush the miserable lady, not by means of a fair and honest trial, but by the shameful attempt to force a bill of pains and penalties through what they hoped would prove a subservient Parliament. This effort failed, as it deserved to do ; but in the process the public feeling was raised to the highest pitch of excitement in favour of the Queen and against her opponents, whether on the throne or in the Cabinet. These events created in the public mind feelings not merely of dislike, but of contempt for the King, in striking contrast to the sentiments of personal respect and affection with which his father had been regarded. Such opinions could not but tell on political affairs, to the extent of considerably affecting the direct influence of the Crown, the more so as they were not confined to any class of society or any party in the State. Canning, who was afterwards to become the first adviser of the Sovereign, resigned the office he held rather than take any share in the prosecution of the Queen. All the Whig leaders voted with Brougham, who was Caroline's attorney-general ; and many of the ministers themselves had previously advocated her cause, and entered with reluctance into the harsh proceedings against her. It was impossible, therefore, when differences afterwards arose, that either Cabinet or Parliament should be willing to modify their views or their conduct out of any private love or regard for the King. The root of prerogative had struck too deeply into the poli-

tical traditions and habits of English politics to be speedily eradicated ; but at least it was not, during the reign of George IV., strengthened by any new manifestation of personal affection.

The only way in which, for a time, this altered relation between sovereign and subjects could practically exhibit itself, was in making possible divisions among the Tories themselves. Their power over the constituencies was so complete—or rather the interests of the majority of the governing class were so involved in the success of their principles—that Parliamentary opposition from the Liberal side was futile. The conduct of the House of Commons which was in existence at the time of the death of George III., furnished no means of judging whether or not any alteration in public opinion was caused by the change of sovereign. But the test of a general election was to be at once applied. On the 17th of February, 1820, the session was formally opened by the speech from the throne, some necessary business was rapidly transacted, and on the 28th Parliament was prorogued and dissolved. During the interval Lord John Russell introduced, and carried through some of its stages, a bill to suspend the issue of writs for Grampound, Penryn, and Camelford, to which, in the course of the debates, Barnstaple was added. A proposition of this kind was not calculated to arouse any great enthusiasm in the mind of reformers ; but neither was it likely to alarm those magnates amongst the Whigs, who, whilst they were honestly desirous of improving the government of the country, did not wish to lose that political and social power which arose from the possession of pocket boroughs and territorial influence in counties.

The elections, therefore, were quiet and uneventful. The new Parliament was very like the old one in its general character, in its hatred of change, and its solid support of the Tory Ministry. The relative strength of parties was soon tested by divisions. The session was opened on the 21st of April, by a speech which acknowledged “the distress which still unhappily prevails among many of the labouring classes

of the community.” On the 3rd of May Hume moved for statements showing the expenditure on civil list account, but was defeated by 113 votes to 60. This may be regarded rather as an independent Liberal than as a Radical vote. On the 8th of May, on a motion for further considering a report of the committee on the civil list, Lord John Russell moved an adjournment of its consideration in order that it might be submitted to a select committee. The full Whig strength was brought up on this occasion, with the result that the Government had a majority of ninety-nine votes, the numbers being 256 to 157; the old ministerial strength was thus manifested.

Any attempt at serious political movement might have well seemed hopeless under such conditions; yet it was in this Parliament, where the Tory preponderance was so great, that the final struggle which ended in the passing of the first Reform Act was practically commenced. It was interrupted by the battle over Catholic emancipation, by striking ministerial changes, and by the interest attaching to the administration of foreign affairs by Canning, but it was never absolutely relinquished. This very time, indeed, was chosen for actively resuming the agitation outside Parliament, by which alone any effective debate inside could be induced. During the remainder of the year 1820, the debates on the treatment of the Queen caused the postponement of nearly all other business. In the following year, however, the reform agitation was resumed, and from that time it was systematically maintained. It is important, therefore, to examine into the constitution of the Liberal party, to ascertain what were the elements to which the popular appeal could be successfully directed.

It has been seen that the distinction between Whigs and Radicals was recognized by the leaders of the party in the House of Commons, both Tierney and Russell on the one side, and Burdett on the other, acting upon the supposition that it existed. It was not, however, as an organized party that the Radicals were generally regarded. The name itself

was intended as a term of reproach, describing men who were looked upon rather as wild and reckless agitators than as serious and responsible politicians. In this, of course, there was nothing more than a repetition of what had taken place when the old names of Whig and Tory were originated. In the present case the use of bad names was more persistently adopted, and it had a long-continued success owing to the peculiar constitution of the House of Commons at the time. The constituencies, as we have seen, were for the most part in the hands of a limited class. There were very few seats, either for counties, cities, or boroughs, which could be secured by a really popular vote apart from either private influence or ministerial control. As a rule, then, the extreme party could only be reinforced by members of the governing class itself, whose convictions were strong enough to resist the pressure of their social and political surroundings. There were exceptions to this rule, but they were extremely rare, being confined to the metropolis, and to one or two boroughs in which the free-men were comparatively independent. Some of the larger counties, too, were responsive to the impulse of great national excitement, although in ordinary times they owned the sway of territorial influence. The abuse and contempt which were heaped upon the name and nature of Radicalism told in many ways upon its fortune. They armed all sections of Whigs to oppose, in the constituencies, any man who was branded with the opprobrious epithet; they cut off from the most reasonable ambition any prospect of an official career; and they prevented anything like organization of a party to which many members were ashamed or afraid to acknowledge adhesion.

In estimating the real strength of Radicalism in this Parliament, we must take count not only of those who accepted the name—for there were few such—but of those also who, whilst remaining nominally enrolled amongst the Whigs, were more advanced in opinion than either the leaders or the majority of their party. Of the avowed Radicals, those who repudiated the Whig leadership, Sir Francis Burdett still remained the chief, both in popular support and in vehemence of action.

On the 8th of March in this year, 1821, he was sentenced in the Court of King's Bench to pay a fine of £2000, and to be imprisoned for three months, for a libel contained in a published letter on the Manchester massacre. The punishment only tended to strengthen him in the confidence of his constituents, and it had no deterrent effect on his own proceedings; for, soon after his release on the 14th of May, he moved in the House for an inquiry into the circumstances attending the massacre, and was strongly supported by speeches from the Liberal benches. On his conviction, a meeting of his constituents was held to sympathize with him, and to raise a fund to pay the fine. On that occasion the chair was taken by his colleague in the representation, J. C. Hobhouse, the first of the set of men known as *Philosophical Radicals* who obtained a seat in Parliament. He immediately took an active part, especially in the discussions on Parliamentary reform, in which he argued the question as one of broad political science as well as one requiring attention from the conditions and wants of the time. Joseph Hume now began, on a plan which involved immense labour, those efforts on behalf of financial reforms by which he afterwards became so well known. If he descended to attack details of the public expenditure, it was not for want of ability to grasp the whole system of national finance. In the speech which he made on the 27th of June, he displayed a knowledge of the real requirements of nearly every department of the public service, founded on an acquaintance with the history of the growth and the causes of the lavish expenditure of the time. His thorough Radicalism on other points gave force to his financial opinions amongst the popular party, and it was greatly owing to his influence that the word "retrenchment" took its place with "peace and reform" as a part of its recognized programme. Two other avowed Radicals should be named, because they sat at different times for one of those Metropolitan constituencies where public opinion could secure Parliamentary representation. Sir Robert Wilson was, in this Parliament, member for Southwark; for which Borough, some years later, Daniel Whittle Harvey was returned.

In 1820 Harvey was re-elected for Colchester, but he was unseated, and remained for some time out of Parliament. Wilson was a very pronounced member of the party, and is the only man who is recorded in Smith's work as having at that time declared himself in his candidature as a Radical.

Amongst those who, whilst advocating and supporting Radical opinions, still retained their connection with the members and leaders of the Whig party, the foremost place was held by J. S. Lambton, afterwards Lord Durham. This great man, with the enthusiasm of a popular leader and the genius of a statesman, was able by his associations and connections to force his broad Liberal principles upon the attention of the most exclusive of the Whigs. The representative of one of the oldest county families in the kingdom,* the son-in-law of Earl Grey, he was in a position which gave weight to opinions which were received with contempt when expressed by less important persons. It was a position, however, in which the whole social and political influences of his class would be brought to bear upon him in order to moderate his views and restrain his action. It was owing to the depth and earnestness of his convictions, and to the strength of his will, that he resisted such temptations, and gave impressions to, rather than received them from, his official associates. Whilst retaining his relations with the Whigs, he extended his sympathies and entered into personal association with the most active of the Radicals. When Duncombe, who had become more Radical, again secured his seat for Hertford in 1830, a message of congratulation came from Lambton; and no one rejoiced more than Durham at the victory gained by Grote in the city of London.†

The influence of Lambton was beneficial both to the cause of reform and to the interests of the Whig party. It did for Radicalism with the official Liberal leaders what the writings of Bentham and Mill had done with reading and thinking

* His family had held the Lambton estates in uninterrupted male succession since the twelfth century.

† "Memoirs of T. S. Duncombe," vol. i. p. 113; "Personal Life of George Grote," by Mrs. Grote, p. 74.

people—obtained for it consideration, not as the wild demand of impatient ignorance, but as something brought by the soundness of its principles within what a later statesman has called “the range of practical politics.” In this way, too, the energy, which might have been lost in mere declamatory agitation, was concentrated and focussed in Parliament. The force which was contained in public opinion, like that in wind or steam, was practically wasted until the machine and the mill were constructed through which it could be utilized. The advantage to the Whigs was even more direct and immediate. Whether for the triumph of their principles or for the gratification of their ambition, their object as a political party was to obtain place and power. Any success of the Whigs would involve some change, however small, in constitution and policy which might injuriously affect the interests of the governing class. It was certain, therefore, that the masters of the present constituencies, the manipulators of Government seats, the owners of pocket boroughs, the territorial magnates of counties, would not entrust power to the hands of a party favourable to reform of any sort. Only by pressure of an extraordinary kind could this dead weight of Conservatism be overcome. Nothing less than an agitation undertaken in real earnest by all sections of the unenfranchised ; the middle class in towns as well as the lower class throughout the country ; the convictions of the educated giving strength and direction to the popular desires and determination ;—nothing less than a thoroughly national movement of this kind could overcome the obstacles to political progress. Such an agitation could neither be aroused nor led by the Whig party as it then existed.

The greater number of the Whigs were men who did not wish to materially reduce the influence of rank and wealth in the government of the country. They owned boroughs and dominated counties, and were naturally unwilling to destroy the power in which they shared. They were honestly desirous of effecting reforms in the administration and in the finances of the country ; they would have secured and extended the

liberty of the subject and the freedom of the press ; and many of them were willing to remove some of the barriers of religious intolerance. But all this they would do for, and not by and with the help of, the people. What slight constitutional modifications were necessary in order to replace an absolutely despotic Ministry by a moderately liberal one, the Whigs would support ; but to transfer the governing power from the hands of their own class to those of the hitherto unenfranchised masses, that was a proposition to which they could not listen. Their schemes of reform were of this feeble and limited character, and had never any real life in them, nor any chance of success. They awakened no popular enthusiasm, and they were contemptuously rejected by the Tory Government.

The work, then, which Lambton, and men like him, had to perform was of a double kind. They had to convince the Whigs that without some real extension of popular power, the practical reforms at which their party aimed were absolutely unattainable ; and that policy, no less than justice, called for the enfranchisement of the people. Then, if they succeeded in this, and to the extent to which they did succeed, they had to form a medium of communication between the Whigs and the trusted leaders of the people. There was plenty of work to do in both directions. The ideas of the Whigs as to the amount of Parliamentary reform required were absurdly inadequate. The difference between their proposals and those which the Radicals advocated was marked distinctly in this year, 1821, in two main directions—in the theoretical arguments of scholars and thinkers, and in the schemes submitted to Parliament by the active politicians of the two sections.

Sir James Mackintosh was one of the most Liberal, as he was certainly one of the most learned and accomplished, members of his party. To the *Edinburgh Review*, No. lxi., he contributed an article on Parliamentary reform, which, although it was not without liberality of view, nevertheless missed the only reason why the nation required any change of

the kind—the necessity that the people should have a direct and influential voice in the government of the country. Mackintosh went to great pains in the construction of a system by which not the masses of the people, but particular social interests, should be represented, numbers being still subordinated to class interests. To a wide extension of the suffrage and to the ballot he was directly opposed. Of course such a proposition, whatever might be its philosophical merits, could never commend itself to the sympathy, nor obtain the active support, of that public opinion without which no alteration of any kind could be obtained. To this article Grote wrote a reply, in which he enforced the principles which he had imbibed by his association with Bentham and Mill, and had matured by the strength of his own learning and intelligence. In the course of his essay he maintained the necessity of a wide extension of the suffrage, of the ballot, and of short Parliaments, and pointed out the fallacy of the Whigs in trying to evade these broad issues by incomplete and fantastic schemes.

In Parliament, two plans submitted, one by Lambton, and the other by Lord John Russell, stand in quite as great contrast. On the 17th of April Lambton moved a resolution founded on a bill which he had prepared, and which he was anxious to introduce. The bill is printed *in extenso* as an appendix to Hansard's Report for 1821, its principal objects being, as he said, the extension of the franchise to the unrepresented classes, the disfranchisement of venal, corrupt, and decayed boroughs, and the recurrence to triennial Parliaments. The plan with regard to boroughs was thorough. It provided for the disfranchisement of all boroughs, cities, Cinque Ports, and other constituencies—excepting only the Universities—returning burgesses to Parliament, and the formation of new districts round populous centres. All householders were to have votes in these districts. In counties the franchise was to be extended to all copyholders and leaseholders. Stringent provisions were to be enacted for the prevention of bribery and corruption. This was a scheme which would have given

real vitality to the representation of the people, and it was of course rejected. It did not even attract a large attendance, and the division—in which forty-three voted for, and fifty-five against, the motion—was taken early, and in the absence of Lambton and some of his friends, who had expected a longer debate.

On the 9th of May Russell brought forward his proposal, which was formulated in four resolutions. The first set forth the existence of bribery and corruption, which might be “destructive to the constitution of Parliaments;” the second declared the necessity of giving to such places as were greatly increased in wealth and population, the right of returning members; the third proposed the appointment of a committee to consider how these members might be returned without making “an inconvenient addition to the members of this House;” and the fourth referred it to the same committee, to consider the mode of proceeding with respect of any boroughs thereafter charged with bribery and corruption. This was the extent to which one of the best of the old section of the Whigs was prepared to go. There was no extension of the franchise, either in existing boroughs or in counties; nothing, indeed, but a small addition to the number of members, which, although it represented populous constituencies, would have been lost, like a drop of water in a bucket, in a House filled with the members of a single class and their nominees. It will be seen that the Radicals had something to do before they could prepare the Whigs to submit proposals that would receive, or deserve, any popular support.

In the course of this session Lord John Russell had a sort of half-victory in the way of reform. On the 1st of February he introduced a bill to disfranchise Grampound and give the two members to Leeds, conferring the right of voting on all inhabitants renting houses at £10 a year. The bill was read a second time, but in committee the qualification was raised from £10 to £20, on which Lord John threw up the charge of the measure, which nevertheless passed and went up to the

Lords. There another serious alteration was made, the two members being given to the county of York instead of to the town of Leeds—a change which took from it all its value in the eyes of reformers, which was exactly what the Conservative peers desired. The measure had to be passed in this shape or given up altogether; no one cared much about so insignificant an affair, and so two more knights of the shire were added to the House of Commons. This was the position of the two sections of the Liberal party on the question of reform at the time when that national agitation was commencing which, during the following ten years, had such an important effect, not only on the fortunes of parties, but on those of the country.

The question of Catholic emancipation was now forced to the front, and, with the increased support which it received, began to produce that effect upon the party organizations to which allusion has been made. On the 28th of February Plunkett moved in the Commons that a committee of the whole House should consider the state of the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, and inquire whether it would be expedient to alter or modify the same. A division in the Ministry was at once manifested. Peel strongly opposed the resolution, which was supported by Castlereagh, and carried by a majority of six. On the 2nd of March the House went into committee, and Plunkett moved six resolutions involving the principles of emancipation, and they were agreed to *pro forma*, Peel announcing his intention to oppose the bills which were to be founded upon them. Two bills were introduced and read a first time on the 1st of March. The subsequent stages were marked by vehement opposition on the part of Peel, and by support from Canning, who, on the second reading, made one of his most eloquent and impassioned speeches. The second reading was carried by 254 to 243; the two bills were then consolidated, and on the 2nd of April, after more speeches by Peel and Canning, were passed by a majority of nineteen. Thus, in little more than a year after the death of George III., the measure to which he had been so bitterly opposed was

carried by a majority in the House of Commons; the ministerial leader in that House, and the ablest and most popular member of the Tory party, although personally opposed on almost every other question, agreeing in its support. The Peers rejected the bill on the 16th of April, by 159 votes and proxies to 120, but its ultimate success was now insured. Lord Grenville spoke and voted in its favour, a matter of course, but of the more importance because, in the following year, the Ministry had to seek an alliance with him and his friends.

The coalition, if it really deserves the name, took place in January, 1822, before the meeting of Parliament. It occasioned very few changes. The Marquis of Buckingham was made a duke, C. W. W. Wynne became President of the Board of Control, and H. Wynne was appointed envoy to the Swiss cantons. The Board of Control had been held by C. Bathurst, in conjunction with the chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, which latter office he continued to occupy, so that there was no displacement, but only an addition to the Cabinet.

The alliance illustrated the existing position of parties, and also affected to some extent their individual composition and their relations to each other. The Tories could not but feel their weakness in Parliamentary ability. Canning had left the Government, and his views with regard to the cause of the Queen, irrespective of the jealousy and dislike with which he was regarded by many of his old colleagues, seemed likely to keep him out of office for some time to come. Castlereagh had little power as a speaker, and Peel had yet to win his spurs as an orator and a tactician. Beyond these and the two law officers, there was no one to meet the attacks of Tierney, Mackintosh, Lambton, Brougham, Russell, Burdett, and other opposition speakers. They wanted to add to their voting power some debating skill, and, if possible without affecting their real policy, to attract to themselves something of the popular character of which all the Whigs were supposed to partake. Perhaps the chief inducement,

after all, was the desire to break up the opposing ranks, and to take from the opposition that section of its leaders who were held to be able, from experience and connection, to take part in the government of the nation.

The experiment was in no way a success, except that in the opinion of the exclusive official circles the Whigs were thought to be more than ever disqualified for office. The actual strength in votes was more than compensated for by the increase of disaffection and disintegration in the Tory party. It was not merely that there were men who thought that the offices and dignities conferred upon the Grenville people would have been better employed in rewarding the services of old and consistent Tories, for some who think they deserve place must always be disappointed whenever there is a redistribution of offices. The grievance on this occasion was more special and better founded. There was already, as we have seen, a difference in the party on the Catholic question which threatened to become a serious split. Grenville and his followers were amongst the most strenuous advocates of emancipation; they had suffered loss of office on its account in former days, and were still firm in its support. In strengthening the hands of Canning and the other Conservatives who took the same view, they weakened those of Eldon and the men who represented the old thorough-going principles of Toryism, and the time was coming when this was to be a matter affecting the stability of the party and the existence of Ministries. There were other points in which a general tendency to Liberalism in domestic, and especially in foreign affairs, still existed in the minds of the Whig seceders, and in which accordingly they encouraged and supported the most Liberal section of the Tory party.

The effect of the coalition on the Whig fortunes and policy was exactly contrary; it caused a little temporary loss, but it proved a permanent gain. What the leaders felt at first was that their chance of obtaining place and power was lessened, and they were consequently angry; but the office which would have been possible to them under the

existing conditions, was office without the ability to carry out any of the principles to which they professed adhesion. By the secession their prospect of any alliance with moderate Conservatives was destroyed, and they were made the more dependant on the other or Radical wing of their own party. This in the end was good for themselves and for the country. It gave them the strength of popular support, whilst they on their part could offer to public opinion the advantages of an experienced and organized Parliamentary party. This approach of the two sections was gradual, but it was certainly promoted by the alliance of the Tories and Grenvilleites, and was further accelerated by the Liberalism, in one or two directions, of Canning and his friends.

Another ministerial change which was made at about the same time was the appointment of Peel as Home Secretary, in the place of Sidmouth, who retired from the office, but remained in the Cabinet. Little importance was attached to this appointment, as it indicated no alteration of policy. The "Annual Register" did but echo the general opinion of the country when it said, "Mr. Peel's political predilections, sympathies, and prejudices were very much the same with those of Lord Sidmouth, so that the substitution of the one for the other could have no effect in the course of administration."* We know how after events falsified this calculation, but for some time it was justified by Peel's adhesion to the whole Tory creed, and especially by his opposition to Canning on those very points, the Catholic question and the policy of protection, on which afterwards he sacrificed his party to the cause of his country.

The Parliamentary session of 1822 was marked by events which illustrated the various party relations and tendencies which have been adverted to, and which were soon to affect the fate of Governments and the fortunes of the people. The ministers resisted all change, except one, which touched the interests of the landed class. Canning continued to represent whatever of Liberalism there was in the Tory party; Lambton

* "Annual Register," 1822, p. 6.

maintained his friendship with the Radicals; and Russell made a material advance in his proposals on behalf of reform.

The one change which ministers were willing to make was to increase the stringency of the corn laws. There had been much agricultural distress, and there was no doubt that relief of some kind was required by the farmers, either a decrease of their payment in rent and taxes, or a rise in the price of their commodities. The Government adopted the latter alternative as the one to be aimed at, and introduced resolutions accordingly. Their first proposal was to make an advance out of the national revenue for loans to farmers on the security of corn placed in bonded warehouses; but this was laughed out of the House and withdrawn. The main resolution was to reduce the price at which the importation of foreign wheat was to be prohibited from eighty to seventy shillings per quarter, insuring a tax on the consumer of a corresponding amount. This was fought at every stage; Huskisson, the great friend and colleague of Canning, joining with Ricardo the Radical in supporting an amendment. Of course all opposition was futile, for Whig as well as Tory landowners were anxious for protection. At first ministers proposed that corn which had been previously imported might be ground in this country for re-exportation; but there was a fear that some of it might get into English markets, and the resolution was withdrawn; Canning, who moved it when ministers abandoned it, obtaining only twenty-one votes, most of those being given by Radicals.

The position of Canning was even now of importance, and was soon to become of the very greatest consequence. It has been said that he represented the Liberal section of the Tories, but it must be remembered that he did this because he remained a Tory. He opposed all constitutional change, all reforms, political or social, with as much earnestness as Sidmouth; and in this session, when Russell moved his reform resolution, the House would not be content until Canning had brought the weight of his eloquence to bear against it. Yet he gave strong evidence in the course of

the session that he remained firm in his adherence to the cause of Catholic emancipation. On commercial and financial questions, too, he was becoming increasingly Liberal. He had, however, given up any hope of ministerial advancement, and so he accepted the appointment of Governor-General of India, which had been offered to him by the Company, and he believed that this would be his last session in Parliament.

Lambton took no very active part in the proceedings of the session, but he did enough to show that he sympathized with the Radicals, and was prepared openly to work with them. On the 22nd of March he presented a petition from Newcastle on behalf of Hunt, whose treatment in prison was the subject of debate in both Houses. The petitioners, in the course of their statement, referred to "the notorious and avowed corruptions which have crept into your House." This passage was strongly objected to; the reception of the petition was opposed by Wynne, the new Grenville ally, Peel, and other ministerialists, and on a division it was rejected by 123 to 22, the minority being almost purely Radical.* Nor was this the only question on which the extreme party acted together. On the 2nd of July Hobhouse moved to repeal the house and window tax, but was defeated by 146 votes to 59. In the mean time petitions in favour of reform continued to be presented, and it was evident that whatever might be the state of opinion on the question inside Parliament, the agitation outside was steadily growing.

The Whigs generally, and Russell in particular, were quite alive to this fact, and were prepared to advance their bids for

* The names given in Hansard are—

Barrett, T. M.	Hobhouse, J. C.	Roberts, Col.
Bernall, R.	Hume, J.	Robinson, Sir G.
Birch, J.	James, W.	Wilson, Sir R.
Bury, Lord	Maberley, J.	Wood, Alderman
Calvert, N.	Maule, Hon. W.	
Creevey, T.	Monck, J. B.	Bennett, Hon. H. G. }
Ellice, E.	Nugent, Lord	Lambton, J. G. } <i>Tellers.</i>
Fergusson, Sir R.	Palmer, C. F.	
Gaskell, R.	Ricardo, D.	

popular support. On the 25th of April Lord John moved in the Commons—"That the present state of the representation of the people in Parliament requires the most serious consideration of this House." The general plan which he intended to propose was the addition of one hundred members to the House, of which sixty were to be given to counties, and forty to great towns not before enfranchised. In order that the total number of members might not be increased, he proposed to take away one representative from each of the hundred smallest boroughs returning two members. This was an advance on any proposition he had before advocated, but its special weakness was that it did not touch the question of the franchise in any of the existing constituencies, and so would still have left the great bulk of the population unrepresented. On a division, there were 164 for, and 269 against, the proposal. This was the largest vote which had been recorded for many years, and its effect was to encourage the reformers to further action.

The Catholic question, which was to do so much to affect the fortunes of English political parties, was rapidly approaching the stage when further delay became impossible. On the 30th of April Canning introduced a bill to enable Roman Catholic peers to sit in the House of Lords. This was not what would be called a very heroic measure, but it served to keep the subject alive, and it gave another opportunity to the Upper House of convincing the Catholics, and the Irish people especially, what was the real seat of the power which oppressed them. The bill was carried through the Commons, but on the 22nd of June it was thrown out in the Lords by a majority of forty-two. The agitation in Ireland was encouraged not only by the position assumed by the House of Commons, but by the almost unaccountable course taken by the Cabinet in the constitution of the Irish Government. At this very time, when they were using their influence with the Peers to counteract the effect of the votes of the representative chamber, ministers appointed to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland the Marquis of Wellesley, a well-known abolitionist.

Although the new viceroy had no power to affect the legal position of the Catholics, yet his well-known sympathy with them, and the tendency to yielding which his appointment indicated, were strong inducements to continued agitation. There was a temptation, moreover, to make their action more and more violent, since, on the one hand, it might be supposed that a friendly lord-lieutenant would not suppress too rigidly any movement in favour of a policy with which he agreed ; and, on the other, the very appointment was a proof that the Government was divided and open to pressure. Thus were the Irish people acquiring that lesson, the most fatal which rulers can teach, the most dangerous which subjects can learn, that reforms and concessions which are refused to orderly agitation may be obtained by disorder and violence. The idea has taken root and fructified, with results which do not even yet seem to have reached the end, and those who are most responsible for its inculcation are undoubtedly the Tory ministers of this period, who opposed the dead weight of their influence in the House of Lords to the just requirements of the Irish people and the growing intelligence and moderation of the House of Commons, until, brought face to face with the threat of absolute revolution, they not only retired from further contest, but themselves made the capitulation at the cost of the disruption and disorganization of their party.

Such was the state of parties, and such the position of great questions, at the close of the session of Parliament, which took place on the 6th of August ; but an event occurred immediately after, which entirely altered the aspect of affairs, and affected the policy not only of this country, but of the whole of Europe. After the prorogation, whilst the King was on a state visit to Scotland, Canning had gone to Liverpool to take farewell of his constituents before his departure for India, when his proceedings were arrested, and the whole country astounded, by the announcement that the Marquis of Londonderry * had, on the 12th of August, com-

* Lord Castlereagh had succeeded to this title on the death of his father in 1821.

mitted suicide at his residence at Foot's Cray. The consequences of the death of Londonderry were more striking than could have been expected by any of his contemporaries. There is hardly another instance in our modern history of the removal of one man, and he not in the first rank as to ability, causing so great an effect on the feelings and the policy of the country. There was a sensation of relief, if not of absolute satisfaction, in the minds alike of foreigners and of Englishmen of which it is tragical to read. Harriet Martineau says, "The relief to a multitude was so extraordinary and portentous that little children who carried the news, as children love to carry wonderful news, without knowing what it means, were astonished at the effect of their tidings, and saw, by the clasped hands and glittering eyes of aliens in English towns, that there was a meaning in the tidings beyond their comprehension. There are some now who in mature years cannot remember without emotion what they saw and heard that day. They could not know how the calamity of one man—a man amiable, winning, and generous in the walk of his daily life—could penetrate the recesses of a world, not as a calamity, but as a ray of hope in the midst of thickest darkness." * The writer has heard old men, the Radicals of that time, describe the share which many Englishmen had in these feelings of relief and satisfaction.

To understand this we must recognize what a oneness there is between the home and the foreign affairs of a nation, and how the domestic conduct of a government is affected by the associations with neighbouring states and the principles which it shares with them in international policy. Castlereagh, although he agreed with the coercive and repressive measures of the Tory Government, was neither their originator nor, except from his being leader in the House of Commons, was he the most prominent of their supporters. Liverpool, as Premier, was more directly responsible, and Sidmouth and Eldon were the most zealous of their advocates ; but Castlereagh, as Foreign Minister, and as the man who had

* "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. i. pp. 286, 287.

been in direct communication with the tyrants of the Continent, had become associated with the despotic theories the maintenance and active development of which formed the one object of diplomatic relations in Europe. He was therefore regarded not so much as the adviser of particular measures of repression—indeed, in the matter of Catholic emancipation he was more Liberal than the other chiefs of the Ministry—but as the incarnation, as it were, of the principles on which despotic government was based. His removal was regarded by many Conservatives as affording an opportunity for delivering the country from embarrassing and dishonouring foreign relations, and by all Liberals as increasing the chances for moderate constitutional changes and reforms.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM THE DEATH OF CASTLEREAGH TO CANNING'S
APPOINTMENT AS PREMIER (1822–1827).

THERE was a general opinion amongst politicians of all parties, on the death of Castlereagh, that Canning was the only man who ought to, or who indeed could, succeed him as Foreign Secretary. This was felt alike by the active members of the Cabinet, who distrusted and feared if they did not positively hate him, and by the majority in the Commons, which, drawing its forces from both sides of the House, desired to see some relaxation of the system of repression, if it could be obtained without venturing upon constitutional changes. The relation of the ministers to a large section of their party, which was marked by this looking towards Canning, was indicative of an important movement which had been gradually taking place in the general opinion and feeling of the country. The wave of reaction and terror which had been raised by the French Revolution was subsiding, and Englishmen were resuming the old respect for liberty, and the old belief that the part of England in European affairs was to side with the cause of freedom against that of despotism and oppression. This feeling, though not universal, was very widespread, and it was compatible with a good deal of difference of opinion on domestic questions; individual and class interests biassing, when they were affected, the judgment which was clearer and truer on foreign affairs. It is because this love of liberty in the abstract was general, and was shared in by members of all parties, that Radicalism, not as a sudden

appearance, not as an isolated fact, but as a result of the natural historical growth of the Liberal tendencies of the nation, increased in power and influence.

It was neither unnatural nor unfortunate, therefore, that the man who was to give expression to, and convert into active policy, this national feeling in favour of freedom, should be a member of the Tory party. Had he been a Whig, he would have had no power to carry Parliament with him ; and the fear that he might introduce the same principles into his treatment of domestic affairs would have closed the ranks of the dominant faction, against which opposition would have been useless. Canning was, on many of the most prominent subjects of the day, a Tory of Tories. He was the most persistent and the most determined of the enemies of Parliamentary reform, and he maintained the privileges and powers of the English Church with the greatest vigour, and so it seemed that he might be trusted to support Liberalism abroad, without danger of applying it too recklessly at home.

The old leaders of the party, indeed, distrusted him, and in that they did but follow an instinct which told them that the spirit in which Canning was inclined to work was perilous to them and to their doctrines. It is true that, in his advocacy of Catholic emancipation, he was in agreement not only with Pitt, but also with Castlereagh ; but with them, and especially with Castlereagh, the opinion was one to be avowed as a theory and as a part of a bargain made at the time of the union, but not to be pushed forward with any zeal, or even with much desire for its success. With Canning the case was different : he was the actual ally and encourager of men whose whole life and soul were devoted to the cause, and he took it up with the intention of carrying it to a successful issue. This distinction, however, was not recognized as vital by many of the Tories in the House of Commons, nor were they quite alive to the effect which the commercial and financial policy of Canning and Huskisson might have upon the interests of the landed proprietary and the fortunes of their party. And so, in spite alike of the wishes of King and Cabinet, Canning

was called, by some undefined and yet well-recognized manifestation of public opinion, to take the office which was of the greatest importance in the Ministry, which made him leader of the House of Commons, and enabled him to affect the policy of the whole of Europe, and thereby to give scope and efficiency to sentiments and principles which were in turn to react upon England, and to give life and force to the popular party here.

The new minister was appointed just in time to give striking expression to the sentiments which he represented. A congress of the European powers, having met at Vienna, had adjourned to Verona. Lord Londonderry had intended to represent England at the meeting, and his death took place whilst preparations were being made for his departure. The Duke of Wellington went instead, the time being too short for any such alteration of policy as would have been involved in the refusal to send a representative. The business to be transacted at Verona was twofold. The nominal object for which the conference was called was to consider the affairs of Greece, and so prevent a war between Russia and Turkey. The real object was different; it was to bring the combined forces of the Holy Alliance to bear to put down the revolutionary movement in Spain, as they had already been used to crush out liberty and national life in Italy. The public feeling of England had revolted against the action of the alliance, and there is no reason to doubt that if Londonderry had lived to attend the congress, he would have refused to join in any enterprise to overturn, by foreign arms, the constitution which the Spanish people had obtained. His refusal, however, would have been only a formal protest, coming from a man known to be in general sympathy with the allies, and would not, most probably, have prevented combined action against Spain. Canning spoke in a very different tone, whatever similarity there may have been in the words, and the effect produced was of another kind.

When the Duke of Wellington was informed that the affairs of Spain would be brought before the congress, he

wrote for instructions.* The reply was, "If there be a determined project to interfere, by force or by menace, in the present struggle in Spain, so convinced are his Majesty's Government of the uselessness and danger of any such interference—so objectionable does it appear to them in principle, as well as utterly impracticable in execution, that when the necessity arises, or, I would rather say, when the opportunity offers, I am to instruct your Grace at once frankly and peremptorily to declare that to any such interference, come what may, his Majesty will not be a party." This despatch was written on the 22nd of September, 1822, and it soon became evident that it would have to be acted upon decisively. The King of France had established a military line along the Spanish frontier. This was at first assumed to be merely a *cordon sanitaire*, to prevent the introduction into France of a virulent fever said to be prevalent in Spain. It was found, however, that the real fever dreaded was that of constitutionalism, or, as the continental monarchs chose to call it, revolution. The French King was bent not only upon stopping the spread of this disease to his own territories, but upon stamping it out in Spain itself by military force, and it was this project which the congress really met to accomplish. On the 20th of October the French minister gave in a paper requiring answers to three questions from the ministers of the allies. The first was whether, if France should be under the necessity of withdrawing her minister from Spain, the other allied powers would do the same. The second inquiry must be given in full, because it set forth not only the action required to be taken, but the principle on which it was to be founded. It ran as follows:—"Should war break out between France and Spain, under what form, and by what acts, would the high powers afford to France that moral support which would give to her measures the weight and authority of the alliance, *and inspire a salutary dread into the revolutionists of all*

* The papers were laid before Parliament on the 14th of April, 1823. They are given in the "Annual Register" for 1823, and are summarized in the same volume, pp. 18, *et seq.*

countries?” The third question was as to the form of the effective assistance which the allies would give to France, in case active interference should, on her demand, become necessary.

To these questions the three continental allies answered, on the 30th of October, that they would act as France should do in respect to their ministers in Spain, and would give to France every countenance and assistance she should require—the cause for such assistance, and the period and the mode of giving it, being reserved to be specified in a treaty. The minister of Great Britain answered, that, having no knowledge of the cause of dispute, and not being able to form a judgment upon an hypothetical case, he could give no answer to any of the questions. France and Spain were both of opinion that this refusal of England prevented the combined interference of the alliance, and practically reduced the difficulty from one involving the whole of Europe to one between the two neighbouring countries. This Canning declared was the first object which he had in view. “The immediate object of England,” he said,* “was to hinder the impress of a joint character from being affixed to the war—if war there must be—with Spain; to take care that the war should not grow out of an assumed jurisdiction of the congress; to keep within reasonable grounds that predominating *Areopagitical* spirit which the memorandum of the British Cabinet of May, 1820, describes as beyond the sphere of the original conception and understood principles of the alliance—an alliance never intended as a union for the government of the world, or for the superintendence of the internal affairs of other states.” Even with regard to France and Spain there was hope that war might be avoided, and negotiations proceeded during the remainder of 1822 and into the spring of the following year, the good offices of England being sought by Spain and accepted by France.

Parliament met on the 4th of February, 1823, whilst the dispute was going on, but before it had culminated

* Speech in Parliament, 30th of April, 1823.

in war. Canning, who had accepted office on the 11th of September, had not yet obtained his seat, and for a short time Peel was the leader in the Commons. Further alterations had been made in the Ministry which tended to strengthen Canning's position, Robinson being appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Huskisson President of the Board of Trade. The King's speech, read by commission, contained the following reference to the affairs of Spain:—"Faithful to the principles which his Majesty has promulgated to the world as constituting the rule of his conduct, his Majesty declined being a party to any proceedings at Verona which could be deemed an interference in the internal concerns of Spain on the part of foreign powers. And his Majesty has since used, and continues to use, his most anxious endeavours and good offices to allay the irritation unhappily existing between the French and Spanish governments; and to avert, if possible, the calamity of war between France and Spain." The interest of Parliament was mainly concentrated on foreign affairs, and was increased by the actual invasion of Spain by the French army. This took place on the 7th of April, and was announced to the French chambers three days afterwards.

On the 14th of April the papers relating to the negotiations were laid before Parliament; and on the 28th a debate, which extended over three nights, was commenced in the House of Commons. Canning was then in his place, having been returned for the borough of Harwich. Mr. Macdonald opened the debate on behalf of the opposition, and moved a long resolution, which, among other things, alleged that the failure to preserve peace arose "in a great measure from the failure of his Majesty's ministers to make the most earnest, vigorous, and solemn protest against the right of the sovereigns assembled at Verona to make war on Spain on account of her political institutions, as well as against the subsequent pretensions of the French government to deny that nations can lawfully enjoy any civil privileges but from the spontaneous grant of their kings;" and concluded by the proposal "to represent to his Majesty that, in the judgment of this

House, a tone of more dignified remonstrance would have been better calculated to preserve the peace of the continent."

The resolution said nothing about interfering by force of arms on behalf of Spain against the attack by France, but that was clearly in the minds of many of the opposition, and Mackintosh the Whig and Hobhouse the Radical both spoke in that sense. There was, indeed, so strong a sympathy with Spain under the injustice which had been committed, and with the cause of constitutionalism trampled on by a foreign army, that it naturally carried away the feelings of all Liberals. It was difficult to limit the effect of such sentiments by considerations of calmer policy, and by the reflection that non-interference and the preservation of peace were the true objects of Radical policy. Canning was able to answer the attacks which were made upon his proceedings, and to show that his conduct was consistent with a hatred of oppression, with a desire to check the ambition of the Holy Alliance, and with a thorough devotion to constitutional principles. His speech was delivered on the third night of the debate, and produced an extraordinary effect upon the House. The opposition, partly perhaps in order to limit the victory of the minister, but mainly because they accepted the principles which he enunciated and were convinced of his sincerity in their vindication, endeavoured to avoid a division. Brougham recommended the withdrawal of the resolution, and when the House would not allow that, it was negatived without a division; but when the amendment proposed on behalf of the Government came to be put, there was an exciting scene. There were cries of "Aye," but none of opposition. Some ministerialists, however, anxious that a division should take place, called out that the "Noes" had it. The Speaker thereon ordered those who wished to vote for the amendment to go into the lobby, and those who meant to vote against it to remain in the House. There was immediately a general rush to the lobby, opposition and ministerial members alike anxious to vote, and, but for the lobby being too small to contain them all, the decision would have been unanimous. As it

was, twenty members, who could not find room in the lobby, formed an unwilling minority, 372 votes being recorded in favour of the amendment.

After this Canning had no further trouble in the House of Commons on account of his foreign policy. His real opponents sat with him in the Cabinet, and their enmity was not likely to be lessened by the fact that the ultra-Liberals warmly supported the action of their obnoxious colleague. The disintegration of the Tory party went on all the more rapidly because of the public triumph of the foreign secretary. The old ministers had their revenge in seeing the differences which were excited between Canning and the Whigs by the conduct which he was compelled to pursue with regard to the Catholic question. He could not make concession on this point a condition of joining the Cabinet, and he well knew that the formation of any other Ministry accepting emancipation as a part of its programme was impossible. He could only do as Pitt had done before him, and as Castlereagh had done throughout his whole late career—accept the situation, retaining his freedom of speech and vote on the subject.

When, however, he went a little further than this, and advised that the question should not be pressed forward in that session, he aroused the indignation of some of the Whigs and Radicals. Burdett, protesting against the position which Canning had taken, formally withdrew from what he said was a useless discussion.* Brougham was more violent, and declared that Canning had “exhibited a specimen, the most incredible specimen, of monstrous truckling, for the purpose of obtaining office, that the whole history of political tergiversation could furnish.” When he had reached this point, Canning started to his feet, exclaiming, “I rise to say that this is false!” A scene followed, which was only closed by one of those arrangements which seem so absurd, and yet are almost indispensable in such a case, wherein Brougham said that he applied the description not to Canning personally—for he entertained the highest respect, and so on—but politically ;

* The debate was on the 17th of April, 1823.

and the minister accepted the explanation. The end of the business was that the emancipation question was not raised again during the session.

On other subjects in the course of the year the Radicals made themselves heard, and the Whigs became increasingly Liberal. The popularity of Canning in the House of Commons made competition with him there impossible, and it was only by insisting upon those points wherein he remained true to Tory principles that the Whigs could rally any public support. Russell continued his action on behalf of Parliamentary reform, and his views were widening so fast, and the influence of Lambton upon his policy was so evident, that the lead of the question was given to the young Whig lord. On the 20th of February Lord John moved for a committee to inquire into the right of voting and the number of persons entitled to vote in cities and boroughs, but was defeated by 128 votes to 90. On the 24th of April he brought on the question in a more direct form, moving, in the same terms which he had used in the previous session, "That the present state of the representation of the people in Parliament requires the most serious consideration of this House." He was again defeated, but the large number of votes, 280 to 169, gave evidence of the continued importance attached to the subject.

Two questions were raised this session, both of which were destined to lead to years of discussion and strife, and to affect very materially the policy and fortunes of English parties. One of these related to the Established Church in Ireland, on which, on the 4th of March, Hume moved four resolutions of a character sufficiently startling to the politicians of that day. The first declared the property of the Church of Ireland to be public property, under the control and at the disposal of the legislature, for the support of religion and for such other purposes as Parliament in its wisdom might deem beneficial to the community, due attention being paid to the rights of every person then enjoying any part of that property; the second called for an inquiry whether the establishment was not more than commensurate to the services it performed;

the third was in favour of a commutation of tithes in Ireland ; and the fourth proposed the appointment of a committee to consider how the objects set forth could be best carried into effect. These propositions, of course, aroused a storm of opposition, and the cries were raised about confiscation and spoliation which have since been used when the principles, which then seemed so daring, came to be carried into actual operation. The first, third, and fourth resolutions were negatived without a division ; but on the second Hume obtained the votes of sixty-two members.*

The corn laws formed the other subject which, being once subjected to Liberal criticisms, could not again be closed until, under a reformed Parliament, public opinion became too strong to be resisted. On the 26th of February Mr. Whitmore, one of the members for Bridgnorth, moved for leave to bring in a bill to amend the corn laws. His proposal was to lower the import price two shillings a year until it came down to sixty shillings a quarter, for he believed that the quantity of corn which might be brought into our markets when the price was so low as sixty shillings would be but trifling. Huskisson, the President of the Board of Trade, approved of the principle, but thought the time not suitable for its application, and advised the withdrawal of the motion. This was opposed and a division taken, the result being the rejection of the motion by seventy-eight to twenty-five. In the minority the Radical votes were prominent, Hume acting as teller with Whitmore, and Hobhouse and Ricardo supporting them.

The modern free-trade policy, which has been so fruitful in social and political results, received its earliest impulse at this time from the action of Canning and Huskisson. The Warehousing Bill, the Reciprocity of Duties Bill, and the Beer Bill all had for their object the modification, or removal of fiscal or protective interference with trade. That this policy was not adopted without strong opposition in the Cabinet might be assumed, and one evidence was given publicly of

* The numbers were—Ayes, 62 ; Noes, 167.

the fact. Huskisson, on the 9th of May, obtained leave to bring in a bill to repeal the Spitalfields Acts, which gave magistrates the power to fix the wages of journeymen silk-workers. The measure was carried through the House of Commons; but in the Lords, although it was supported by the Premier, it was strongly opposed by the Lord Chancellor, and rejected.

In these various directions, we see that public opinion was making itself felt even in the Parliament which so indirectly, and to so limited an extent, represented the people. Outside, the fact was impressed more and more upon the popular mind, that whilst on many vital subjects alteration and reform were necessary, yet that substantial progress was hopeless without some change in the constitution of the legislature. This opinion had, during the recess, been expressed by county meetings all over the country, and the proceedings in Parliament during the session of the year 1823 were calculated to give it both strength and courage.

The Spanish question continued to engage attention and to embitter the relations between different sections of the Cabinet. The French army had marched without opposition through Spain, and had enabled the King to alter the constitution. This had been regarded with the utmost dislike by every Liberal politician in England. France, however, asserted the disinterested nature of her interference, and the British Government maintained its neutrality. There were two consequences of the invasion, however, which threatened to render this position untenable. One was the position of Portugal, to which country the reactionists of Spain looked with hatred, and they desired to inflict upon the constitution there the same injury which France had done to their own. But England was bound, no less by treaties than by inclination, to preserve the independence of Portugal, and Canning had given notice that this duty would be performed at any cost. On the other side, the French were anxious to put down the revolutionary risings which had taken place in the South American colonies of Spain, and to restore them to the

subjection which they had thrown off. Here again Canning was firm. Early in the negotiations he had denied the right of European monarchs to decide under what form of government the Americans should live ; and, whilst recognizing the right of Spain to preserve her hold upon the colonies if she could, he refused to acknowledge the transfer of that right to the foreign power which for a time was dominant in her territory. He said, "We will not interfere with Spain in any attempt she may make to reconquer what were once her colonies, but we will not permit any third power to attack them or to reconquer them for her."

A further and more decisive step was taken in August, 1823. An application had been made by merchants that commercial agents should be appointed to protect British interests in South America. On the 22nd of August an answer was sent by direction of Canning, which stated that the subject was under consideration ; and shortly afterwards consuls and consuls-general were appointed to the principal stations in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chili, and Buenos Ayres,* and this was the first step towards the recognition of independence. What is most interesting to us is to learn that in all these resolutions in favour of national liberty, Canning had to meet the determined and persistent opposition of Eldon, Sidmouth, and their friends. Harriet Martineau, speaking of Canning's trials at this time, says, "He met with almost as much resistance at home as abroad ; he was twice on the verge of retiring from office, before he finally achieved the recognition of South American independence. Up to this time Lord Sidmouth had retained a seat in the Cabinet without office ; he now resigned it, partly because he could not agree with those of his colleagues who advocated the immediate recognition by his Majesty of the independence of Buenos Ayres."† Thus was the old party of resistance to Liberalism shaken internally, and rendered unable to meet

* "Annal Register," 1823, p. 146.

† "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. i. p. 299.

the attacks which were to be made upon its policy, alike in home and foreign affairs.

The year 1824 was not fruitful in discussions or divisions which tested or affected the strength of parties. One question, however, was dealt with in Parliament which only a Radical like Hume would have brought forward. That indefatigable man moved, on the 12th of February, for a committee to inquire into the laws concerning artisans and machinery. Three points were submitted for their consideration: first, the state of the combination laws; second, the propriety of legalizing the emigration of artisans; and third, the expediency of permitting the exportation of machinery. In their report, submitted on the 21st of May, the committee recommended such a modification of the combination laws as amounted to a virtual abrogation of them, and a direct and total repeal of those Acts which prohibited artisans from leaving this kingdom to exercise their callings in foreign countries. As to the exportation of machinery, the committee recommended that further inquiry should be made in a future session. In accordance with the recommendations of the committee, two Acts were passed.* The first abolished all the old regulations of the combination laws, whilst it provided for the severe punishment of those who should attempt to influence or overawe by violence or intimidation. The second repealed the old laws against the emigration of artisans.

Hume's activity was not restricted to this one object, nor to the constant efforts he made to reduce the expenditure and redress financial abuses. Whilst debates about the grievances of the Roman Catholics of Ireland went on without result, he struck at the foundation of the whole evil by declaring that the only course which could be pursued with advantage was "to break up the Irish Church entirely." He afterwards moved—"That it is expedient to inquire whether the present Church Establishment of Ireland be not more than commensurate to the services to be performed, both as regards the number of persons employed and the incomes

* XCV. and XCVII. of 4 and 5 George IV.

they receive." For this resolution he obtained more votes than was expected, the numbers being—Ayes, 79 ; Noes, 153. Scarcely any Irish members voted in the minority, the Protestant and Church interest only being represented in Parliament. Hobhouse was scarcely less energetic than Hume ; he supported the member for Aberdeen, acting as teller with him in the division on the motion for prohibiting corporal punishment in the army,* and himself repeating his proposal to abolish the window tax. By these means many of the objects on which improvement was required were kept before the public, and the reason for seeking for Parliamentary reform was made more and more evident.

The most important events of the year 1824 were the formation and proceedings of the Catholic Association in Ireland, the first open meeting of which was held in January. For twenty-four years the Catholics had waited the redemption of the pledges given when the Act of Union was passed, and had waited in vain. It is true that the cause had gained strength in the House of Commons, where a majority had been recorded, and that in the Peers the majority against it had been decreased. If the subject had been a merely speculative one, in which the growth of opinion could be left to make its way, so that with intellectual conviction the thing would be settled, this state of things might have been encouraging. The case, however, was altogether different. Whilst English parties were debating, a whole nation was kept in a state of subjection to laws which were of the most unjust and disgraceful character. The national religion was not only discouraged, but the profession of it was made the cause of entire political disfranchisement, whilst the Church of the alien minority was upheld at the cost of the nation which repudiated it. Vested interests, theological prejudices, firmly rooted traditions, were united in defence of the injustice. The Crown, the Peerage, the Church, were allied with the organized power of the governing class to resist change ; and against such a combination it would require more than a mere

* On the 15th March, when the numbers were 47 for, and 127 against.

occasional vote in the House of Commons to force a practical solution of the difficulty. It became evident to the Irish leaders, that if it were left to the decision of English parties in the English Parliament, their cause, so far as their own generation was concerned, was hopeless. So they naturally and wisely determined to take the case into their own hands, and to obtain by the force of a national agitation what they had vainly asked from a sense of justice.

The time was well chosen for the establishment of the Association. The strength of the cause in the House of Commons, although not sufficient to carry the proposed relief, was a powerful auxiliary, which was likely to become still stronger as the agitation outside grew more active. The division amongst ministers, if it could not lead to the formation of a Cabinet pledged to emancipation, prevented the possibility of framing one which should unanimously oppose that policy. There could be no union and no peace among English statesmen until the question was disposed of, and it could be finally settled only in one way. As if to encourage the Irish people in their agitation, the division which existed in the Government in England was marked and illustrated by differences in the Irish administration, in which one minister favoured, and one opposed, emancipation. This in itself was a concession to the popular feeling which invited further manifestations of its power. It was more than this, for it was a virtual admission of the justice of the demand, since otherwise no Ministry could have consented to the appointment, as lord-lieutenant, of a nobleman who was one of its advocates. The continued resistance of the extreme Tory party and their representatives in the Peers was under these conditions equal to a statement that justice and policy were alike unavailing against prejudices, bigotry, and class interests. It was the beginning of a system to which we have since become only too well accustomed, whereby agitation is resisted until it threatens to become revolution, and concessions are made to fear which are refused to reason and justice.

Agitation of a violent kind was the more natural before the passing of the Emancipation and Reform Acts, because the majority of the Catholic population were absolutely without any representation in the Parliament which had the control of their fortunes. The Association stood forward on their behalf, and it did directly represent the people in whose name it acted. Just at this time, too, a great leader presented himself who could stir the enthusiasm of his followers and fearlessly attack their opponents. The time was coming when Daniel O'Connell was to be an active element in national politics, ranging himself often with the Radicals in opposition to the Whigs: but at present he appears only as the champion of the cause of his own oppressed countrymen. Under his leadership the Catholic Association rapidly grew in power and importance, having much more influence in Ireland than was possessed by the imperial Parliament. During the first year of its existence it held regular sessions in Dublin, nominated committees, received petitions, referred them to a committee of grievance, ordered a census of the population to be taken, and even proceeded to levy a tax upon the people. It assessed the cities, towns, and parishes, appointing collectors in every district for the receipt of a tax which they called "Catholic rent." * What alarmed the Government not less than its success in directing agitation, was the ability of the Association to ensure an obedience to the law which its ordinary administrators could not effect. At the bidding of the Association ribbon brotherhoods and secret societies of all kinds ceased their operations, agrarian crime disappeared; the whole energy of the people was bent, in obedience to their leaders, upon accomplishing the one object of emancipation.

The speech with which the Parliamentary session of 1825 was opened on the 3rd of February, contained references to three subjects of great interest: the formal recognition of the independence of some of the Spanish South American colonies; the success of and the propriety of extending the free trade policy recently commenced; and the position and objects of

* "Annual Register," 1824, p. 42.

the Catholic Association. In the debate on the address, Brougham declared that with regard to the first two points—the South American colonies and free trade—the policy which the Government had at last adopted was that which the opposition had long advocated, and was only an acceptance of Liberal principles. This was true, but it was no less true that, but for Canning's wisdom and courage, both principles would have had to wait much longer for adoption. As it was, every step he took was accompanied by obstruction and animosity in the Cabinet, and was, in fact, leading to the break-up of the party in whose name he was acting.

The Act obtained by Hume in the session of 1824, for repealing the laws against the combination of artisans, had been followed by violent proceedings in many parts of the country, which alarmed capitalists and forced themselves upon the attention of Government. The terms in which the restraints of the common law had been removed were too sweeping, and doubtless encouraged ignorant men to follow illegal and dangerous courses. So there was panic where there had been sudden liberality, and on the 29th of March, 1825, Huskisson moved for a committee to inquire into the working of the Act. The committee recommended the repeal of the law of last session, and the enactment of provisions by which the action of the common law was restored, with the condition that an exception should be made to its operation in favour of meetings and consultations amongst either masters or workmen, the object of which was peaceably to consult upon the rate of wages to be either given or received, and to agree to co-operate with each other in endeavouring to raise or lower it, or to settle the hours of labour. Combinations to control employers by moral violence were again subjected to the common law. Hume and Burdett both protested, and with reason, that sufficient time had not been allowed to judge of the permanent effect of the new law, but the recommendations of the committee were carried by large majorities.

It was the Catholic question which engrossed the chief attention of Parliament during the session, and the first form

in which it was raised was an attack by Government upon the Association. The King's speech had stated, after referring to other Irish matters, "It is, therefore, the more to be regretted that associations should exist in Ireland which have adopted proceedings irreconcilable with the spirit of the Constitution, and calculated, by exciting alarm and exasperating animosities, to endanger the peace of society and to retard the course of national improvement. His Majesty relies upon your wisdom to consider without delay the means of applying a remedy to this evil." When the speech was under discussion, Brougham declared that at every stage of the proposed bill, on the first reading—nay, on the introduction of papers—"he for one would take his stand, and offer every opposition which he could to what appeared to him to be an enormous mischief, bottomed in the grossest injustice."

In his reply to this speech, Canning made use of some very remarkable expressions. Brougham had invited him, with respect to the Catholic and the South American questions, to cut himself off from the illiberal members of the Government. "What," he asked, "had a minister to fear, with this House, these benches, the country, all England at his back?" Canning could not deny the existence of differences in the Cabinet, but he said that Brougham was wrong as to their character. The line which was frequently drawn between the supposed Liberals and Illiberals of the Cabinet council was by no means a straight, but a serpentine line. As regarded the Catholic question, it was nearly straight and direct; but wherever habit did not arbitrarily prevail, or personal honour was not pledged, the members brought their minds to the discussion totally disengaged. "The project of breaking up the Cabinet and forming a completely new one from the different benches of that House, would be found not very easy in practice." He was before long to find the task terribly difficult—impossible, indeed, except at a cost of anxiety and labour which broke down his powers and ended only with his life. That he was induced now to speak of it at all, was a proof that his thoughts were exercised as to his future position, and his

doing so must have been significant to some of his colleagues.

On the 10th of February Goulburn moved for leave to bring in the bill which was intended to suppress the Catholic Association. The motion led to a debate which lasted over four evenings. It was on the last night, the 15th of February, that Canning made the great speech in which, whilst defending his opposition to the Catholic Association, he gave a history, called for by attacks which had been made upon him, of the devotion with which he had supported the cause of emancipation, and the sacrifices which he had made on its behalf. He described how, in 1812, he had refused office when it would have been most acceptable to him, rather than enter into an administration pledged against the Catholic question; and how he had been compelled, in consequence of his continued adherence to the principle, to give up another long-cherished hope. "From the earliest dawn of my public life—ay, from the first visions of youthful ambition—that ambition had been directed to one object above all others. Before that object all others vanished into comparative insignificance; it was desirable to me beyond all the blandishments of power, beyond all the rewards and favours of the Crown. That object was to represent in this House the university in which I was educated. I had a fair chance of accomplishing this object, when the Catholic question crossed my way. I was warned, fairly and kindly warned, that my adoption of that cause would blast my prospect. I adhered to the Catholic cause, and forfeited all my long-cherished hopes and expectations." This speech created a deep impression. It was felt that a cause for which such a man had made such sacrifices could not be much longer postponed.

The Act was passed; the Government and the legislature had done their worst. National attention had been called to the Association; it had been threatened, and it survived in essence, having only to change its name and alter some of its methods of action. O'Connell afterwards said that there was no Act of Parliament through which a coach-and-four could

not be driven, and certainly this particular measure did not stop the progress of the Irish agitation. The very House of Commons which had thought it necessary to vindicate the law by the Act against the Association, thought itself bound to promote the object which the society was established to secure. On the 1st of March Burdett moved that the House resolve itself into committee to consider the state of the laws affecting Roman Catholics, and the motion was carried by 247 votes to 234. Six resolutions were then passed, and a bill founded upon them was ordered to be brought in by Burdett, Tierney, Grant, Plunkett, Mackintosh, Canning, Palmerston, H. Parnell, Abercrombie, and Spring Rice. Of these ten, four were members of the Government, one of them being the leader of the House of Commons, and this in itself formed an important advantage to the cause of emancipation. On the 23rd of March the bill was brought in by Burdett. It proposed to abolish Catholic disabilities ; to make a State provision for Catholic ministers, and as a set-off in favour of the Protestant Irish, to raise the county franchise in Ireland from forty shillings to ten pounds.

The bill passed the House of Commons, the second reading being carried on the 21st of April, by 268 to 241, and the third reading on the 10th of May, by 248 to 227. Between the two dates an event took place which might have been attended with serious consequences, but which, mainly owing to the strong common sense of the nation, merely produced a transient effect. This was no less than an attempt—the last one which has been made in this country—to interpose the royal prerogative between the nation and the execution of its will. The effort was made not by the actual occupant of the throne, but by the heir presumptive ; and it was fortunate that it was so, since the danger of a collision between Crown and Parliament was rendered the more remote, and ultimately avoided. It was after the second reading of the bill in the Lower House, that the Duke of York rose in the House of Lords and made a declaration of his determination to oppose that and any similar measure. He asserted that his view of the coronation

oath was that which was taken by his father, and would forbid him ever to assent to a proposition for the removal of the Catholic disabilities. He concluded with the statement that “these were the principles to which he would adhere, and which he would maintain and act up to, to the latest moment of his existence, whatever might be his situation of life—so help him God !”

Such a proceeding as this might, a few years later, have precipitated the revolution, the fear of which drove Wellington and Peel to desert the cause they had so long upheld. This was avoided, but the duke's speech led to complications and to increased activity on both sides of the dispute. It was on the 25th of April that it was delivered, and on the very next night Brougham entered a very spirited protest against it in the House of Commons. He urged the House to proceed with the bill with the more earnestness and vigour, since delay might lead to serious consequences. “There was not,” he said, “an hour to be lost, for the time might come when even such a majority would be ineffectual ; and when the unanimous vote of both Houses of Parliament, joined to the expression of opinion from the whole country, would have no other consequence than to lead to an irreparable breach with the Crown.” But whilst the speech was used as an incitement to speedy action by the friends of emancipation, it served to encourage the opponents to a more vigorous resistance. This was seen when the bill reached the House of Lords, where it was defeated on the second reading by 178 to 130. There was no further attempt to raise the question in that Parliament.

In the early part of the year 1826 there was a good deal of activity in the House of Commons. It was felt that an early dissolution was to be expected, and the commercial crisis which had followed upon an era of the wildest speculation was spreading distress amongst all classes of the community. The subjects of the corn laws, the national expenditure, and Parliamentary reform were sure to receive attention at such a time. Parliament met on the 2nd of

February, and lively discussions soon took place. Hume was particularly active. On the 9th of March he presented a petition praying for an alteration of the corn laws, which Mr. Curwen met with the statement which now seems perfectly incomprehensible, that "if permission were given to import corn into this country without restriction, the result of it would be visible in a few years in the production of a famine." Mr. Whitmore moved, on the 18th of April, for a committee to consider the propriety of a revision of the corn laws, but was defeated by 215 votes to 81. Ministers opposed Whitmore's motion; but the pressure of distress became great, and threatened to grow still more severe, and after prolonged discussions in both Houses they passed two temporary bills—one to permit bonded corn to be taken out for home consumption, and the other to admit not more than 500,000 quarters of foreign corn for home consumption under certain limitations. During the recess these provisions were found to be insufficient to meet the emergency, and Government had to take further action on its own responsibility.

Financial questions were frequently discussed, and Hume took his full share in the debates. On the 4th of May he made a formal motion on the state of the nation, preceded by a string of forty-five resolutions touching upon almost every topic connected with the state and management of the finances. Such a proceeding gave no opportunity of a practical issue, but it served to call the attention of the country, on the eve of an election, to subjects of the gravest importance. Hobhouse also took a share in the efforts to promote economy, moving for a reduction of the army, and obtaining thirty-four votes for the proposal.

Lord John Russell again brought forward the question of Parliamentary reform on the 27th of April, when he moved—"That the present state of the representation of the people in Parliament requires the serious consideration of this House." Lord Althorpe seconded the resolution, and Hobhouse made a long and able speech in its favour; but it was lost by 247 votes to 123.

The Parliament which could not deal with the great religious subject which agitated Ireland, found time during its last session to pass an Act relating to the not less fruitful cause of anxiety, the tenure of the land in that country. The statute 7th George IV. c. 29 was "An Act to amend the law of Ireland respecting the assignments and sub-letting of lands and tenements," and its object was to prevent the sub-letting of property by a lessee, whether the original lease did or did not contain a covenant against sub-letting. The point to be noticed with respect to this Act is, that it formed one of the continued series of attempts to assimilate the Irish land laws to those of England, although the customs and the facts underlying them were essentially different. The Irish tenant had a right of property in his holding quite unlike that of an English farmer, and legislation of this sort was an attempt to interfere with the exercise of the right, which, however it might seem to English economists to be wise and prudent, was essentially unjust. Such a method of treating the land question was merely a preparation for trouble in the future. It was carried easily, of course, for there was no representative of the Irish tenantry in the House of Commons, and no landlord thought it wrong to support the interests of his class, or had an idea that any system of land tenure which differed from that of England could be worthy of respect. This deep-rooted cause of dissatisfaction in Ireland did not make itself felt in the Radical party at the time; but after emancipation, and when even a portion of the tenant farmers obtained the franchise, it became a political element of great importance.

The session was closed on the 31st of May, and on the 2nd of June Parliament was formally dissolved, the writs for the election to be returnable on the 25th of July. The general election which followed was not marked by any striking events likely to affect the balance of parties. Any direct addition to the ranks of avowed Radicalism was not to be expected; the conditions of the suffrage and the character of the constituencies rendered that impossible. Cobbett and Hunt both offered themselves, the one for Preston and the

other for Somersetshire, but rather by way of protest or demonstration than with any hope of success. One new member was returned who became an active Radical, and was afterwards a leader of the extreme section of Chartists. This was T. S. Duncombe, who obtained a seat for Hertford, and was at once received as an important friend to the cause of Parliamentary reform. He was a curious instance of the sources from which for the time the Radical ranks could alone be recruited. Vehement in his desire to extend the political power of the people, his advocacy did not arise from any personal connection with them, either by descent or association. A member of an old county family, himself an officer in the Guards, and accustomed to all the habits and modes of thought which such surroundings would be likely to form, he was able to obtain a seat in spite of opinions which kept out Cartwright and Cobbett, and other old and earnest reformers. He remained to the end an exceptional man, always what was called a *social swell*, yet always a thorough and consistent Radical. That his services were less valuable towards the end of his career than was expected by some of his friends, was owing more to the effects of his imprudent social and private life than to any alteration of his political opinions or intentions.

What could be done by the election was to place before the country the measures which a truly Liberal policy would promote, so that the public mind might gradually prepare itself for action when the time came. Of these subjects, those which were most insisted upon during the contest were the corn laws and Catholic emancipation.* The discussions brought immediate loss rather than gain to the Liberal side of the House. The Radicals, it is true, suffered no defeat, Burdett and Hobhouse being again returned for Westminster, Wilson for Southwark, and Hume for Aberdeen; but the Whigs met with some serious reverses, the Bedford interest especially receiving a decided check, and some of the northern counties rallying to the Ministry. The fact was that the appeal of the

* "Annual Register," 1826, pp. 169, *et seq.*

Duke of York, and of the old Tory faction on behalf of resistance to the Catholics, was responded to by the owners of seats, and whatever was the opinion of the people generally, the voters had to obey the commands of their masters. So that, as was seen when Parliament met, the cause of emancipation lost ground by the election.

The case of the corn laws was different. The pressure caused by the commercial distress, added to the fear of a bad harvest, was so great, a positive famine being threatened, that ministers were compelled to exceed their constitutional powers, and to open the ports to some classes of foreign corn without waiting for the return of the price averages. Such a course made a special meeting of Parliament necessary, a fact which helped to concentrate public opinion upon the laws, which could only be maintained at the cost of national suffering, and to escape the natural results of which the constitution had to be violated.

The new Parliament met on the 14th of November, and, the preliminary formalities disposed of, the King opened the session by a speech, in which he said, "I have called you together at this time for the special purpose of communicating to you the measures which I judged necessary to take in the month of September for the admission into the ports of the United Kingdom of certain sorts of foreign grain, not then admissible by law." This being the only business to be brought forward, there was no real trial of the strength of parties. On the address being moved, Hume proposed an amendment dealing with Ireland, the corn laws, and Parliamentary reform, but only obtained twenty-four votes in its favour. The bills of indemnity passed without serious discussion, but it was announced that ministers proposed to deal further with the question of the corn laws when the House met again after Christmas.

Before the adjournment took place, an important international difficulty arose which had to be dealt with and explained to Parliament. A new constitution had been established in Portugal which was very distasteful to the reactionary

government of Spain. When opponents of the reform in Portugal itself took up arms and were defeated they retired into Spain, where, instead of being interned, they were organized, rearmed, and sent back to continue the civil war in their own country. This course was continued so long and so systematically as to form a virtual invasion of Portugal, with the object of changing by external force its form of government. Against such attacks England was bound by treaties to protect her ancient ally, and although Canning had been averse to interfere by arms when the French invaded Spain, he did not shrink from the undoubted responsibility which now devolved upon him. After repeated remonstrances to the court of Madrid, it was decided to send an expedition to the Tagus, and this form of protest was at once effectual. The Spanish Government withdrew from its indefensible position, and Portugal was left free to conduct her own internal policy. One effect of these proceedings was to strengthen Canning's position, both in Parliament and in the country. This made it more than ever impracticable that a Ministry could be formed without him, and thus rendered more unavoidable a disruption in the Tory party which could not but serve the cause of Liberalism. The ministerial defence of the Portugal policy was made in both Houses on the 12th of December, and on the following day an adjournment was made till the 8th of February.

The year 1827 opened amidst a political calm which did not at all presage the violent events which marked its course. The commercial storm was subsiding, a good harvest had removed the danger of scarcity of food, and the Ministry had agreed and had pledged itself so to deal with the corn laws as to reduce their stringency and to increase the freedom of trade to which they formed so serious an impediment. With regard to the question of Catholic emancipation, there was to be expected the usual contest between parties, if not between the two Houses. The death of the Duke of York, which took place on the 5th of January, removed one element of difficulty even in this matter, since it was no longer

necessary to force on a decision for fear that the next occupant of the throne might attempt to interpose his veto between the decision of Parliament and its proper result. There was every appearance, therefore, that a quiet and business-like session would be held. Never were appearances more strikingly falsified by events.

In accordance with the terms of the adjournment, Parliament met on the 8th of February, and Lord Liverpool gave notice that on the 19th of that month he would introduce the Corn Bill in the House of Lords. On the 12th the Premier moved the address to the King on the death of the Duke of York, but a few days after he was attacked by a paralytic stroke, from the effects of which he never recovered. Some relief of the more acute symptoms was obtained, but it soon became evident that his public life was closed. This sudden event precipitated that division of the Ministry and disruption of the Tory party which had long been preparing, and which no other influence than that of Lord Liverpool was able to prevent. Length of office, respectability of character, and equability of disposition, made it possible for him not only to unite in his Cabinet men of divergent and even of conflicting opinions, but to induce them to work together in the pursuit of a common policy. It was on his persuasion that Canning had consented to enter a Cabinet in which the chief and the majority were opposed to him on the Catholic question. There was no one left who could do as Liverpool had done ; no one under whom the differing sections of the Ministry could all be induced to work. From his position in the Cabinet and in the confidence of the House of Commons, Canning had the first claim to the premiership. But Eldon and Wellington and Peel were all resolved not to serve under him, with his views on the great subject. It was true that he offered to leave emancipation an open question, as it had been under the late Prime Minister ; but they replied that it was one thing to have it left in that position with a Premier agreeing with them, and another to enter a Cabinet under a chief who was the leading and most active advocate of the

the opposite side. On the other hand, if, this being the only point of difference, Canning had consented to waive his undoubted claims on that account, he would have ruined his own character for sincerity, since he had been more than once reproached with having taken office without making the acceptance of emancipation a condition. The decision so difficult to arrive at was naturally postponed as long as possible, under the nominal hope that Liverpool might recover sufficiently to resume his old post.

Whilst affairs were in this unsettled and critical position, the subject which was the immediate cause of most of the difficulty came on for discussion in Parliament. As early as the 29th of February we know that Canning had spoken to Peel, and that the latter had refused to take office under a Premier holding Canning's views.* On the 5th of March Burdett moved—"That this House is deeply impressed with the necessity of taking into immediate consideration the laws imposing civil disabilities on his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects, with a view to their relief." On this resolution the two sections of the Ministry, as well as the two parties in Parliament, had to try their strength in the new House of Commons. There was no question as to the solid Tory majority on general subjects; the question now was as to the number of those who would leave the ranks and follow Canning and his friends. It was a curious spectacle, that of official colleagues striving against each other; not new as regarded the particular object, but with new conditions added by the state of the Cabinet. Canning and Plunkett replied to Peel and Copley, and the issue was looked forward to with great anxiety. It disappointed the hopes of the emancipationists, the numbers being for Burdett's resolution, 272; against it, 276. This proved that, as far as the British constituencies went, the cause had lost ground by the election, for in Ireland a great effect had been produced by the priests and O'Connell.

The question of the alteration of the corn laws was in a different position. There was, no doubt, considerable difference

* Peel's speech in the House of Commons, 1st of May.

of feeling among the Ministers and their party on the subject, and Canning's free-trade policy was one cause of the dislike with which he was regarded by some of his colleagues. Here, however, he was stronger, because Peel was more in accordance with him, and no open division had taken place. There was scarcely a responsible politician who did not admit that the necessities of the time called for some modification of the law, and in form, if not in spirit, the Cabinet were united. The matter was to have been introduced to the House of Lords by Liverpool on the 19th of February, but his illness intervened, and it was left to Canning to open the business in the Commons. Canning, however, was himself unwell, having caught, at the funeral of the Duke of York, a chill which laid the foundation of the illness which was so soon to prove fatal. On the 1st of March he was well enough to attend, and he then made a statement of the proposals of the Government.

The principle of protection to native agriculture was retained, but the scale of duties and the prices at which it should apply were considerably modified, and there was to be no actual prohibition, only such rapid increase of taxation as would, in reality, stop importation. The price of sixty shillings per quarter was fixed as the first point at which high duties should begin. At that price the duty was to be twenty shillings, to decrease two shillings for every rise in price of one shilling per quarter, until at seventy shillings there would be left nothing but a permanent one shilling registration fee. On the other side, the duties were to increase two shillings for every fall of one shilling in price, until at fifty-five shillings per quarter the impost would be thirty shillings; and this was practical prohibition. The relief—and it would have been a material one to the consumers—lay first in removing the clause by which the old Act was not to come into operation until the price was eighty shillings, a figure which it had never reached, then in the reduction of what was the average price aimed at, and the encouragement which a reduced scale would give to foreign trade. There were amendments proposed by the landlords to increase, and by the free-traders to reduce,

the scale of duties, and one by Hume to substitute a fixed duty ; but they were all defeated, and the bill embodying the resolutions of the Government passed the third reading in the House of Commons on the 12th of April, the day when the adjournment for the Easter holidays took place.

Whilst these transactions were being conducted public feeling was growing impatient with the continuance of what was really a ministerial interregnum. On the 30th of March Tierney moved to refuse a vote of supply on the ground that there was no responsible administration to whom it could be entrusted. Canning opposed the motion, and it was of course defeated, but it served to prove that some decision must be soon come to as to the persons by whom, and the principles on which, the affairs of the country were to be conducted. There was to be little more delay. On the 10th of April Canning received instructions from the King to form a Ministry, and he then found that the distrust and dislike of him extended amongst the old Tory section of the late Government even farther than he had anticipated. When he went to hold an interview with the King on the 12th, he took with him the resignations of Wellington, Peel, and Bexley ; and those of Eldon, Bathurst, and Westmoreland followed him to the royal closet. Presenting these refusals to serve to the King, Canning said, " See here, sire, what disables me from executing your Majesty's will. Nothing is yet done which commits your Majesty to any particular line of conduct ; but I must crave permission to state to you, that if I am to go on in the formation of a new Administration, my new writ must be moved for to-night, for I cannot go on through the recess without endeavouring to finish the business." His Majesty gave him his hand to kiss, and Canning was minister.*

* "Annual Register," 1827, p. 100.

CHAPTER X.

FROM CANNING'S PREMIERSHIP TO THE PASSING OF THE
REFORM ACT (1827—1832).

WHEN Canning received from the King his appointment as First Lord of the Treasury, six of his colleagues in the Cabinet had resigned their offices. The resignation of Lord Melville followed, and thus seven out of the twelve members of the Cabinet refused to act with him. Nor was this all. Wellington ceased to be master-general of the ordnance, an office which he might have held, and at Canning's death did hold, without politically attaching himself to the Ministry. Other and minor offices were vacated. Mr. Wallace retired from the mastership of the Mint, Sir Charles Wetherell from the office of attorney-general, and Sir J. Beckett from that of judge-advocate. The changes extended even to the household. The Duke of Dorset resigned his staff as lord chamberlain, and his son, the Marquis of Graham, the office of vice-chamberlain, and the Marquis of Londonderry ceased to be one of the lords of the bed-chamber. These changes, we are told,* came unexpectedly upon the country, and it was evident that social pressure was to be added to political influence to make the task of the new minister seem hopeless.

That, in spite of these tactics, and of the active antagonism of the old Tory leaders, of their most influential followers in the Lords and their dependents in the Commons, it was found to be impossible to prevent the appointment of Canning or his success in forming a working administration, must have

* "Annual Register," 1827, p. 100

been owing to the growth of Liberal opinion in the party itself as well as in all other sections of the community. The fact that this growth or change, constant although gradual, was going on in the nation, gives its greatest importance to the history of these transactions. If the acceptance, by an increasing number of members, of Radical opinions had been an isolated fact, it would have had little result, and have been worthy of little consideration. It is because the birth and progress of Radicalism were parts of a national development that they possess permanent interest. The accession of Canning to power marked and drew attention to a distinct stage in that development, appreciable in every party and section into which English politicians were divided.

There was at one end of the scale the extreme high Tory party, and even there the altered state of affairs was sufficiently evident. That there was no one to take the place of Liverpool as a Premier pledged to resist Catholic emancipation was in itself significant. Sidmouth's place was unfilled; and Eldon, who was willing enough to rally to the old cry of resistance and repression, was quietly dropped, even when a compact Tory Ministry was contemplated after the death of Canning. Peel had already given an intimation of his liability to conviction; Wellington was not long in learning that the old doctrine could not be reconciled with the new life; and Copley—now made Lord Lyndhurst—accepted office under the new Prime Minister, with whom he had engaged in bitter controversy but a week before. The movement which isolated Eldon and affected Peel manifested itself in another section of their party, by furnishing to Canning such a number of supporters as, added to the votes he received from the Liberals, gave him a working majority in the House of Commons.

We come then to the Whigs, and it has been before observed that there was a very considerable and very rapid advance made by the representatives of the old leaders on the subject of Parliamentary reform. With some of them, no doubt, the opinion was affected by the fact that it was

evidently hopeless for them to expect to obtain power without some change was made in the representation. They found that even the popular enthusiasm, which was the only instrument that could be used to force the close constituencies, was obtainable only by the acceptance of some such thorough scheme of reform as was advocated by the Radicals. This was in itself a proof, to them at least, that the country was growing in liberalism even amongst the class which could be expected to influence elections. These party calculations, however, by no means account for the whole of the change among the Whigs. Their members shared in and added to the national movement in the popular direction. A party that could produce, and place confidence in, a Lambton must have been really progressive. The spirit which was thus manifested in the ranks of both the old parties could not but give at once encouragement and power to the Radicals themselves; and Hume, Burdett, and Wilson, in different ways, showed that they were conscious of the force which was behind them in the state of public feeling and opinion. They did not doubt that any genuine reform would add to their numbers and their strength in Parliament.

This was the state of feeling that made it possible for the new Premier to form a Ministry strong enough and bold enough to undertake to govern the country against the wishes of the majority of those who had hitherto regarded office as their monopoly. When Parliament met on the 1st of May, after the recess, Canning had completed his arrangements, both as regarded the construction of the Cabinet and the support which was to be expected from the Liberal side of the House. There was no coalition in the way of a distribution of place and responsibility. A few Whigs, Scarlett among them, took places; but the party leaders remained out of office, although there was a general promise of independent support. The House of Commons, when it assembled, presented a most unwonted appearance. On the ministerial side sat the leader of the House, surrounded by many of his old colleagues, and with a considerable number

of the rank and file which had been used to obey his commands. But on the same side now sat men who had been all their lives in opposition, and to whom the vote in favour of ministers was indeed a novelty. Some of the small band of Radicals went across with the Whigs. Lambton, Burdett, and Wilson were prominent in their support of the Premier: but Hume refused to share in the action; he had no confidence in the real Liberalism of Canning, agreeing in that respect with the opinions so fiercely expressed by Lord Grey in the other House. He showed his own determination, and put to the proof the concession which his old friends were prepared to make for the sake of upholding ministers, by a motion which he brought forward on the 31st of May, for repealing one of the notorious Six Acts which imposed a stamp duty on cheap periodical publications. There could not have been proposed a more severe test, but it was met openly by Sir Robert Wilson, one of the oldest and staunchest Radicals, and obtained only ten votes in its favour.*

Not all his popularity in the country, nor the union of his new with his old friends in the Commons, could save Canning from defeat at the hands of what was practically a new element in the Constitution—the House of Peers as remodelled and essentially reconstructed by George III. and his successor. It has been seen how and why this work of changing the character of the Upper House was begun during the Ministry of Pitt,† and it was continued throughout the remainder of the two reigns. The extent of the change, and the permanence of its influence, may be gathered from the fact that whilst, during the reigns of William III., Anne, and the first two Georges, there had been of peerages which now exist only fifty-three creations or elevations in the peerage

* The following are the names of what may be called the irreconcilables, contrasting them with the opportunists who supported Canning:—

Dawson, A.	Lombe, Edward	Warburton, C.
Ferguson, Sir R.	Maitland, Captain	Wood, John
Hobhouse, J. C.	Monck, J. B.	Hume, J.
Howick, Lord	Pelham, C.	Wood, Alderman

} *Tellers.*

† *Ante*, Chap. IX.

of the United Kingdom, there were, between the accession of George III. and the year 1827, no fewer than 250 of such new or promoted peers, in addition to the twenty-eight Irish representative peers, who, from the method of election, were as a matter of course of the same political complexion. The first object of this policy was to counteract the traditional Liberal feeling of the old noble houses, and to check their too independent power, which had made them not amenable to the influence of the Crown and its ministers. That part of the work it had accomplished, insidiously and quietly, but not the less thoroughly. Hitherto it had not been necessary to use this new instrument against the majority of the House of Commons ; it was formed, in fact, to act in accord with that majority. In the short intervals when Fox and Grenville and Grey were in office, both Houses were equally under the influence of the Crown, and the “ King’s friends ” in one place were as industrious as nominees in another in undermining the power of the actual Government. During the long and weary time when the Tory administration had ruled, the Peers were the willing supporters of the policy of repression and coercion, of obstinate resistance to progress or to change of any kind, and there was at least unity amongst the various constitutional powers—Crown, Lords, and Commons being agreed.

A new state of things had arisen when public opinion made itself felt in the Lower House, in spite of the narrowness and corruption of the representative system. The Peers then took up the position of opponents of the new spirit, the enemies of all change ; in alliance with the King so long as he was in accord with them ; in antagonism to Crown and Ministry and Commons, when the privileges of their order and the interests of their class seemed at stake. The first step in the pursuit of this disastrous policy was taken when an amendment to the Corn Bill of the Government was carried in committee, on the motion of the Duke of Wellington, by seventy-eight to seventy-four. This was finally confirmed on the 12th of June by another vote, when

the report of the committee was brought up, by the larger majority of 133 to 122. The bill would have removed all prohibition of import, and the amendment proposed that "foreign corn should not be taken out of bond until the average price of corn should have reached sixty-six shillings." By some extraordinary process Wellington had persuaded himself that this amendment would not vitally affect the bill, and that it would be accepted by the Government. Such an idea was really preposterous, and the bill was abandoned, Canning feeling and speaking very warmly against the course taken by Wellington.

From that time to this the House of Peers has seldom, if ever, given a voluntary vote in favour of measures to increase religious, civil, political, or commercial liberty. Its members have yielded many times under pressure put upon them by their wiser leaders, under fear of famine, under threats of revolution ; but they have yielded only after prolonged resistance, and their opposition has been one of the factors to be taken into account by all who have had to advocate or carry out any proposal for reform.

In the excited state of persons and parties, there was no hope of practical legislation during the remainder of the session of 1827. A temporary bill was passed giving the Government power to let out of bond any corn then bonded, together with any that should be warehoused by the 1st of July in that year ; Canning declaring his intention to re-introduce in the next session the bill which had been defeated by the Peers. An attempt was made to deal with the notorious and growing corruption at Parliamentary elections, and some legal reforms were effected on the motion of Peel ; but on the 2nd of July—three weeks after the loss of the Corn Bill—Parliament was prorogued. The royal speech which closed the session contained the ministerial challenge with regard to their defeat in the concluding paragraph, which said, " His Majesty trusts that, although your deliberations on the corn laws have not led, during the present session, to a permanent settlement of that important question, the consideration of it

will be resumed by you early in the ensuing session, and that such an arrangement of it may finally be adopted as shall satisfy the reasonable wishes, and reconcile the substantial interests, of all classes of his Majesty's subjects."

This challenge was never to be vindicated. The frame of Canning, undermined by previous illness, broke down under the excitement and the grief caused by the defection of his old colleagues, and the fierce attacks of some members of the party to which he had always belonged ; and on the 8th of August he died at Chiswick, in the same house in which Fox had breathed his last. So passed away one of the greatest of English statesmen, before he had been able to realize the objects on which his mind was most earnestly set, but not before he had created an important effect upon the state of political parties, and upon the whole future policy of his country. With an intellect clear and richly stored, an imagination vivid and active, and a nature at once tender and enthusiastic, he was formed to endeavour to embody high principles in national policy, and to allure and encourage men to unaccustomed courses by the charm of his manner as much as by the earnestness of his nature. He was the first of three famous men who have left the Tory party for the sake of carrying out measures which they believed to be essential to the well-being of the State. Unlike Peel, he was not induced by the pressure of events to adopt a course of which he had not formerly approved ; unlike Gladstone, he never became thoroughly imbued with general Liberal principles ; but, like them both, he did not hesitate to sacrifice party loyalty and personal associations for the sake of what he considered public duty. The first to enter upon the path, he was subjected to the most violent attacks, and was destined to achieve the least practical success.

The influence of Canning, though less direct in the way of actual legislation, was scarcely less important than that of his two successors as regarded the future history of parties. So strongly intrenched were the Tories, not only in the House of Lords, but through their territorial influence in counties and

their command of corrupt boroughs, either as private owners or as the depositaries of the Government power, in the Commons also, that no successful attack could be made upon them by ordinary Parliamentary proceedings.* There were but two ways in which the growing Liberalism of the country could make itself felt. One was by violent agitation and the fear of revolutionary action. This element was to make itself felt in the case of the Irish demand for emancipation; and, later on, something of the same kind was experienced in the final struggle for Parliamentary reform. Another and better method of breaking down the obstinate resistance of the Tories was by some action within their own party, which should lessen the dead weight of obstruction, and increase to a sensible extent the number of members amenable to the expression of public opinion. It was in effecting this last object that Canning's action was most beneficial to the nation. A breach was made in the ranks of the defenders of abuses, and the army of reform was encouraged to make ever-renewed attacks.

It seemed at first that Canning's death would arrest the

* The extent of the direct influence of the peerage upon the so-called Representative House, is illustrated by the following letter from Croker to Canning, which was written to induce Canning to pay more deference to the aristocracy. It is published in the recently issued "*Life and Letters of Croker*," vol. i. p. 370.

"April 3, 1827.

"DEAR MR. CANNING,

"Some gentlemen, and particularly our friend Sir George, talk so slightly of blue ribands that I think it right to send you a memorandum which will show you, in one view, how impossible it is to do anything satisfactory towards a Government in this country without the help of the aristocracy. I know that you must be well aware of this, yet the following summary may not be useless to you, though I know that it is imperfect.

"Yours, dear Canning, most truly,

"J. W. C.

"Number of members returned to the House of Commons by the influence of some of the Peers:—Tories.—Lord Lonsdale, 9; Lord Hertford, 8; Duke of Rutland, 6; Duke of Newcastle, 5; Lord Yarbro' (for W. Holmes), 5; Lord Powis, 4; Lord Falmouth, 4; Lord Anglesey, 4; Lord Aylesbury, 4; Lord Radnor, 3; Duke of Northumberland, 4; Duke of Buccleuch, 4; Marquis of Stafford, 3; Duke of Bucks (2), 3; Lord Mount-Edgcumbe, 4=70, besides at least 12 or 14 who have each two seats, say 26=96.

"Whigs.—Lord Fitzwilliam, 8; Lord Darlington, 7; Duke of Devon, 7; Duke of Norfolk, 6; Lord Grosvenor, 6; Duke of Bedford, 4; Lord Carrington, 4=42, with about half a dozen who have each a couple of seats, 12=54."

movement which he had promoted. Experience proved once more that, however important the influence of a great man may be in arousing and directing national opinion, he does but direct and cannot create the force, nor can his loss destroy the tendency of popular progress, which is the result of the irresistible law of growth and development. The Ministry, it was evident, could not long survive its chief. There was no one to take his place as a Parliamentary leader, and no other member of the party who commanded outside confidence. Nor could it be expected that the Whig magnates would consent to give their independent support to any man less distinguished than Canning had been ; and the Cabinet contained no man with a claim to such distinction. Huskisson was perhaps the ablest man in the Administration, and he, besides, was known to have been most closely associated with Canning, and to have shared most intimately in his councils ; but Huskisson was not thought of as the successor of his friend, and the weakness of his conduct in first taking office under Wellington, and then resigning without having thoroughly decided to do so, proved that he did not contain the stuff of which a fighting minister in a time of extraordinary excitement ought to be made.

Lord Goderich, who, as Mr. Robinson, had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, became Premier ; but his Ministry did not live long enough even to meet Parliament. On the 8th of January, 1828, he resigned ; and, after some negotiations and correspondence, and in spite of a recent declaration that he should be mad if he ever thought of undertaking an office for which he was so little fit, the Duke of Wellington became Prime Minister.

The Tories might well have expected that good days were coming back to them. The duke was one of their staunchest members, as resolute in his conviction, it was supposed, as he was firm in will. He would not listen to compromise in the case of the Canning Ministry, and State and Church might alike feel secure from change under his administration. But fate is stronger than the strongest will, and the set determina-

tion of a nation's tendencies are no more to be kept back than the flow of the tide can be restrained. So Wellington, who was properly described as "the strongest and most peremptory man of all," was not able to realize the hopes of the reactionaries and put a stop at once to the progress of reform. He could not, or he did not try to, even form a distinctly Tory Ministry. The Whigs, indeed, who had allied themselves with Canning and Goderich, were dismissed, and Tierney and Scarlett went once more into opposition ; but the Canningites, not less hateful to the true Tory, remained in office. Huskisson, Dudley, Palmerston, and Grant kept their places ; and poor Lord Eldon, who had looked to the accession of Wellington as the sign of coming triumph, sat at home, waiting in vain for the realization of his hopes. He was the representative of the party of blind resistance which had already become antiquated, and was not even asked to join the Government.

There was a popular outcry, not because Huskisson and his friends were asked to keep office, but because they consented to do so. They justified themselves by the assurance that the policy of their old leader was to be continued. A little prescience would have enabled them to say that it was destined to be exceeded in Liberalism. Parliament met on the 29th of January, 1828, the King's speech being chiefly remarkable for speaking of the battle of Navarino as "an untoward event." It was in the debate on the address that the Canningites made their explanations, and Russell replied in sarcastic terms to the eulogy of Wellington, with which Palmerston accompanied the defence of his own conduct—an episode not without interest at the time, but made still more noteworthy by the subsequent history of the two men.

The chief event of the session was one which helped to prove how little the greatest men can do in the face of a national movement, and how the wisest are often at a loss to understand its real power and meaning. When Canning was making a declaration of his policy, he had declared that he intended to strenuously resist the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. It might well have been supposed that

the ministers for whom Canning had been too Liberal would have refused under any conditions to sanction a reform which he had opposed, yet they soon found themselves powerless to prevent it. The Acts were so flagrantly unjust, and at the same time so useless, that the wonder was that they could have been maintained so long. They never could have been but for the Acts of Indemnity by which their violation had been covered. As it was, they merely represented pretensions to supremacy and predominance on the part of the Church which were a constant course of irritation and disgust to the dissenters. That a Parliament, which it was felt would soon relax the laws imposing disabilities on Roman Catholics, should allow the continuance of the insulting restrictions upon Protestant sects, could hardly be admitted by the Liberals. Preparations for the attack had been made in the previous session, and on the 26th of February Lord John Russell moved—"That this House will resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider so much of the Acts of 13 and 25 of Charles II. as requires persons, before they are admitted into any office or place in corporations, or having accepted any office, civil or military, or any place of trust under the Crown, to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the Church of England." The resolution was opposed by ministers; Huskisson, Peel, and Palmerston spoke against it, but it was carried by 237 to 193. The House at once went into committee *pro forma*, and obtained leave to sit again on the 28th. On that day Lord John moved a resolution for the repeal of the obnoxious clauses, and it was agreed to, the members of the Government withdrawing before the vote was taken.

They were not yet agreed upon the ultimate course which they should take, although they had convinced themselves of the impossibility of successful resistance. Their retirement from the House gave rise to some criticism and ridicule, which fairly represented the effect upon the country of their anomalous position. No change took place before the second reading of the bill founded on the resolutions, which, on the 14th of

March, was carried without a division. By the time for going into committee, fixed for the 18th of March, ministers had made up their minds to accept the inevitable. On that day Peel, speaking on behalf of the Government, at the head of which was the Duke of Wellington, the champion of Conservatism, announced the surrender. "He was," he said, "prepared to dismiss from his mind any idea of adhering to the existing law, or even of the proposal of mere suspension." The best and wisest course, he declared, would be to come to such a final arrangement as, while it should not affect the fair and conscientious scruples of the dissenters, would give a reasonable proof to the Church of England that in the repeal of the tests her rights were to remain sacred. He accordingly introduced a declaration to be taken, in lieu of the tests, that the person taking office would never exert any power or influence which he might possess by virtue of his office, to injure or subvert the Church. The amendment was accepted, although not without protest from the Liberals, and the bill passed the Commons. It was taken into the Lords virtually as a Government measure, and passed the second reading there on the 17th, and its final stage on the 28th, of April. Some alteration had been made in the wording of the declaration, to make it look as much like an oath as possible; but this was accepted by the Commons, and the bill became law. The change, however, by which the declaration was made, "on the true faith of a Christian," had the effect of keeping out the Jews, and so of raising another long and bitter struggle between the friends and foes of religious liberty.

The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was a proof that the Radical feeling in the country was making itself felt in Parliament, in spite of restricted franchises and close and corrupt constituencies. The Ministry were supposed to be all-powerful, yet they opposed it in vain, and public opinion was so decided that they could not continue their resistance. The measure was not a favourite one with the old Whigs, for not many years back they had furnished its strongest opponents. Harriet Martineau says, very truly, "The credit is

due, not to either the aristocratic or the liberal section of rulers and their adherents, but to the Liberal members of each House unconnected with Government." * Important as the Act itself was, the conditions under which it was passed were, politically speaking, almost as important, and they raised questions as to the duty and responsibility of ministers of the gravest character. The Government of a constitutional country have a double duty to perform : they must carry out the wishes of the people expressed through their legitimate representatives, and at the same time they are bound to give to the Crown advice founded on their own conscientious opinions, and to endeavour to carry out that view in their policy. If these two duties conflict, as they must often do, the course would seem clear : they have no power to resist the will of Parliament, they have no right to act against their own convictions ; they should resign, and give place to those who can honestly accept the national decision.

Wellington and his colleagues chose not to accept this alternative, and they set, for almost the first time, an example—which has since been often followed by Conservative ministers—of undertaking to carry out a policy to which they were on principle opposed. In the present instance there was no pretence of altered opinion. One week ministers strongly opposed the repeal of the Acts ; the next, they themselves supported and carried the measure. There were, no doubt, peculiar circumstances attending this case, and the same will be found as other instances occur ; but casuistry is as dangerous in politics as in morality, and the issue must be tried by an appeal to principle. That there are serious evils attending the course adopted by the Government can hardly be denied. It strikes at the root of the personal responsibility of ministers ; for if an Act, which they perform unwillingly and against their own opinions, turns out to be injurious to the country, how are they to be blamed ? It weakens the national sense of conscientiousness in politics when ministers can do indifferently what they consider wrong and what they consider

* " History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. i. p. 467.

right, and it is then difficult to see where morality comes into practical politics. That men who carry out a particular Act do so not because they believe in it, but because it is essential to their retention of power, will be apt to limit its application, to check its operation, and thereby injure its character and effect. This may be a minor evil, but it is, nevertheless, one palpable and almost inevitable.

There were excuse and apology to be made for the Government in the present instance. The opinion of the nation and of Parliament on the point raised was unmistakable; but, without some constitutional reform, there was only one way in which it could be obeyed. With the then existing constituencies there was no possibility of any but a Tory Administration, and to such a Government constitutional change was absolutely inadmissible. There seemed, then, only the alternative of submission on the part of ministers, or of something like administrative anarchy, and as it was the first principle of Wellington that his Majesty's Government must be carried on, we can understand how he persuaded himself to sacrifice his own views for the purpose. The same difficulties gave rise to other concessions on the part of the same ministers: there was in every case the necessity of passing Radical measures without adopting the Radical policy of Parliamentary reform. The whole process, after all, rather promoted than retarded the coming changes, since it convinced the timid that if the policy which the Radicals advocated could be safely adopted by a Tory Government, the advocates themselves could not be so dangerous as their opponents pretended.

The Premier himself had to make another concession, and suffer a humiliation which peculiarly affected himself. When the Corn Bill of 1827 was withdrawn in consequence of the amendment carried by Wellington, Canning had declared that a similar measure should be introduced in the following session. This pledge had to be redeemed by the Ministry of which the duke was chief, and a bill was brought in without the clause which, the year before, the present Premier had declared to be indispensable. The measure did not quite

satisfy the Canningite ministers, because it slightly raised the scale of duties; but it was accepted all round as a compromise, and was speedily carried, being first brought in by Grant on the 31st of March, and on the 26th of June finally passed.

It was known that these difficulties and concessions in Parliament answered to differences and dissensions in the Cabinet, and that the state of things there was strained and critical. The climax was reached in a quite unexpected manner. Canning had always been an opponent of Parliamentary reform, yet it was a question of reform which led to the separation of his former friends and followers from the Ministry. It was a little matter, to be sure; but, as Mercutio says, it was enough. At the very beginning of the session, on the 31st of January, Lord John Russell obtained leave to bring in a bill to disfranchise Penryn and enfranchise Manchester, giving votes to £20 householders; and on the same day Mr. Tennyson took the same course with regard to East Retford—in this case the members to be given to Birmingham. There was a difference of opinion as to the disposal of the seats, one party wishing to give them to large towns as proposed, another desiring to give them to the hundreds adjoining the original boroughs. Here again ministers were not agreed, Peel saying that if there were two boroughs disfranchised, he would enfranchise one large town; and Huskisson declaring that if there were only one seat to dispose of, he would give that to a large town. It was not a very serious difference, as it seemed, but when the rupture was inevitable the exact occasion was not of much importance. Events seemed to conspire curiously to bring about the crisis. The Penryn Bill passed the House of Commons with the Manchester clause in. Whilst it was before the Lords, with a certainty, as was felt then, of being rejected, the East Retford Bill came on, and an amendment was moved to give the seat to the hundreds instead of to Birmingham. It was on the 19th of May that this critical question arose. Peel, who had consented to the enfranchisement of Manchester, was free to vote for the amendment, which he did. Huskisson's course was not so clear.

But he was sure that the Peers would reject the Penryn Bill, and then there would be but one seat to dispose of, and, in accordance with the spirit of his pledge, he voted for the enfranchisement of Birmingham and against his colleagues. Huskisson may seem to have exaggerated the importance of this vote, but the already uneasy relations of the Cabinet must be taken into account. He acted hastily, however, for on the very night of the division he wrote a letter which he thought contained an expression of willingness to resign, but which the Premier regarded, and acted on, as a positive resignation. There were some attempts, unfortunate and undignified on the part of Huskisson, to reverse this decision; but the duke was firm, and the resignation was final. Huskisson made his explanations on the 2nd of June, and all the Liberal, or, as they were called, Canningite ministers followed Huskisson; Lord Palmerston, Lord Dudley, Mr. Lamb, and Mr. Grant, all left office, and their places were filled by Tories, so that at last there was a Cabinet united in devotion to the same political principles.

It was too late now for the closest unity to bring peace to the official ranks. There were troublesome questions constantly arising which no agreement in the Cabinet could put down. Even before the resignation of Huskisson, a warning had been given that the work of concession to the new feelings of the country was not finished. The new spirit was alive, and the Radicals at least were neither afraid to appeal to it nor disappointed at the response. Hume and Hobhouse continued the struggle for economy and retrenchment. On the 13th of May there was a vote on a proposal to make a provision for the family of Canning. It was not a pleasant thing for the Whigs to oppose such a proposition, but Hume challenged a division, and obtained fifty-four votes against the motion, amongst the number being Lord Althorpe, Burdett, and Hobhouse. A week afterwards the same indefatigable economist moved for a return of pensions on the civil list, with a view to some reform, and for this resolution, so unpalatable to all officials or possible officials, there were

recorded 52 to 131 votes. Both these votes were much larger than only a year or two before could have been obtained for such proposals.

The subject, however, which was most in men's minds, and threatened not only the repose of ministers, but the peace and stability of the nation, was that of Catholic emancipation. The new House of Commons, when appealed to in 1827, had given a majority of four against proceeding with a consideration of the question; but the House, like the country, was growing in liberalism. On the 12th of May this year (1828), Burdett moved—"That the House do now resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, for the purpose of taking into consideration the state of the laws affecting his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects in Great Britain and Ireland, with a view to such a final and conciliatory adjustment as may be conducive to the peace and strength of the United Kingdom, to the stability of the Protestant establishment, and to the general satisfaction and concord of all classes of his Majesty's subjects." The motion was opposed by Peel on behalf of the Government, but after three nights' debate it was carried by a majority of six, the votes being 272 for, and 266 against. This was a sharp reply to the Premier, who had said, in the discussion on the Test Acts, "There is no person in this House whose feelings and sentiments, after long consideration, are more decided than mine are with regard to the subject of the Roman Catholic claims; and until I see a great change in that question, I certainly shall oppose it."* The declaratory resolution having been passed in committee, it was on the 16th of May, on the motion of Burdett, resolved that the resolution should be communicated to the Lords in conference, and their Lordships' concurrence asked thereto. The conference took place on the 19th, and the resolution, being conveyed to the Upper House, was taken into consideration on the 9th of June. It was debated for two days, and was ultimately defeated by a majority of forty-four. The Duke of Wellington, although opposing the motion, did so in

* "Annual Register," 1828, p. 104.

a far less decisive tone than usual ; he was perhaps not quite certain that the "change" about which he had spoken was to be long deferred.

The session closed on the 28th of July, but even before then an alteration had taken place in the character of the agitation in Ireland, which promised little peace for a Cabinet united against concessions to the Catholic claims. The Irish leaders determined to carry the contest into the polling-places of the counties, hitherto the stronghold of Conservatism. They began in a sufficiently striking manner. Mr. Fitzgerald, who sat for county Clare, was nominated to succeed Mr. Grant as President of the Board of Trade. He was in favour of the Catholic claims, and expected to be returned without opposition. It was decided, however, to begin the new movement at once, and to make it only the more remarkable by first attacking a half friend. O'Connell himself was nominated, and was elected by 2057 to 983 votes. The victory was overwhelming, and it encouraged the Catholics to declare that every county seat in Ireland should be won, and it proved their possession of power to carry out the threat. At the same time, the Act for its suppression having expired, the Catholic Association was openly and ostentatiously re-organized, and assumed what was practically the government of the country. There was something for the duke and his united Cabinet to ponder over before they again met in Parliament.

They thought over their difficulty to some purpose, and with a result that was to astonish the whole country. The duke had begun to make concessions, and now he saw nothing before him but violence, which would amount to civil war or the greatest of all capitulations. He and his Cabinet—the men who had driven Canning to despair, if not to death—determined to surrender. They were all doubly pledged to resist the Catholic claims, and they decided to grant them. We can imagine that the struggle cost them anxiety and pain ; but they kept their trouble to themselves, whereby they were saved from many a useless reproach

and from any chance of organized opposition. The closeness with which they kept the secret was made a subject of special attack. The chronicler of the day says, "The Protestant party found that, up to the very moment of the assembling of Parliament, they had been allowed to rest in the belief that the question would not be stirred, or that, if it should be stirred, the influence of the leading members of the Cabinet would still stand in its way; while, in truth, their most tried friends had been plotting and planning how they might most successfully secure a triumph to the enemy, and were concealing at the same time their intended defection, up to the instant when the contest was to begin. It seems impossible to acquit the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel of having acted, in this part of the affair, with a disingenuousness which might be perfectly in its place in a miserable political intrigue, but which limited their character as public men in relation to a question of such vast and vital importance." *

These and such-like criticisms, not altogether undeserved, ministers knew that they would have to face when they announced to Parliament the completeness of the concessions they proposed to make. The session opened on the 5th of February, 1829, and the speech from the throne contained the following statements with regard to Ireland:—"The state of Ireland has been the object of his Majesty's continued solicitude. His Majesty laments that in that part of the United Kingdom an association should still exist which is dangerous to the public peace and inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution; which keeps alive discord and ill will amongst his Majesty's subjects; and which must, if permitted to continue, effectually obstruct every effort permanently to improve the condition of Ireland. His Majesty confidently relies on the wisdom and on the support of his Parliament; and his Majesty feels assured that you will commit to him such powers as may enable his Majesty to maintain his just authority. His Majesty recommends that, when this essential object shall have been accomplished, you

* "Annual Register," 1829, p. 4.

should take into your deliberate consideration the whole condition of Ireland, and that you should review the laws which impose civil disabilities on his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects."

In the performance on the national stage which followed this overture, the farce preceded the tragedy. The Catholic Association, which had brought about the great result, was to be sacrificed before its work was allowed to culminate. The process may have seemed desirable, but it could not be dignified. As a precaution, it was not necessary; as a piece of revenge, it was contemptible. With the introduction of the Government measure for emancipation, the Association would have died a natural death, and there was small glory in slaying the champion when the cause had triumphed. There was little time lost over this preliminary business. It was not resisted by the Catholics, who knew, from the Premier's speech on the address, how complete was to be their victory. On the 10th of February Peel obtained leave to bring in a bill for putting an end to the Association, and it went rapidly through both Houses, being passed by the Lords on the 24th of the same month, a fortnight serving for the whole process. This was the last act which Peel performed as member for the University of Oxford. On the 4th of February, the day before the meeting of Parliament, he had written to say that he was ready to vacate his seat, leaving it to the university to decide when his formal resignation should be sent in. The offer of resignation was accepted; he again stood, but was defeated after a three days' poll by Sir H. Ingliss. He was elected for the borough of Westbury, in Wiltshire—a vacancy being made by the retirement of Sir M. Lopes—in time to introduce the great measure of the session.

On the 5th of March, the same day on which the royal assent was given to the Act for the suppression of the Association, Peel rose to move that the House should go into committee on the laws which imposed disabilities on the Catholics. The proposed bill, as sketched on this occasion

by the minister, and as subsequently carried, was a wide, and on the whole, a wise one. It contained clauses, and was accompanied by other measures, which were neither just nor dignified ; but, as regarded its main object, it was bold and complete. It repealed those laws which placed Catholics, unless they took certain oaths, on a different footing from Protestants, even in regard to real property ; it provided for the admission of Catholics to Parliament on the same terms with Protestants ; and it admitted Catholics to all corporate offices, to the enjoyment of all municipal advantages, and to the administration of civil and criminal justice. The only offices from which Catholics were for the future to be excluded were those of Regent, of Lord Chancellor of England or of Ireland, of Viceroy of Ireland, and of all those connected with the Church, its universities, and its schools. They were also restricted from the exercise of Church patronage. What were called securities consisted in the provision of an oath in lieu of the oath of supremacy, whereby Catholics entering Parliament bound themselves to support the existing institutions of the State, and not to injure those of the Church ; in forbidding the display of the insignia of office in any place of worship other than those of the Established Church ; and in requiring that communities bound by monastic vows should not be extended, and that the number of Jesuits in the country should not be increased.

To all these so-called safeguards there was little to object, considering the state of opinion at the time, but there were other measures proposed of which the same cannot be said. The most contemptible proposal was that which refused to make the Act retrospective, the only object or possible effect of that being to prevent O'Connell from taking his seat without re-election. There was another provision, made by a separate measure which was carried on stage by stage with the Relief Bill, which was unjust and reactionary. This was a limitation of the county franchise in Ireland by the substitution of a ten-pound for a forty-shilling qualification. The restriction of the franchise is a direct inroad upon the

spirit of representative government ; it is an assertion that the people are not entitled to a voice in the administration of their own affairs. To maintain limitations which already exist, is bad enough ; to take votes from those who possess them, is insulting as well as unjust ; but to do this whilst a remedial and conciliatory measure is being offered to promote peace and remove disaffection, is of all conceivable courses the most impolitic and unstatesmanlike. It inflicts a new wound whilst an old one is being healed, and makes national health impossible. Such were the great measures, with their merits and their faults, which the Ministry—in violation of all their previous policy and pledges, but in accordance with what they believed to be a solemn national duty—proposed and carried. We need not follow the course of their progress through Parliament. The Emancipation Bill was, as we have seen, first explained to the Commons on the 5th of March, and on the 13th of April it received the royal assent.

The passing of this great measure was another proof that neither class interests nor party organizations, neither the determination of ministers nor the resistance of peers and monarch, could permanently defeat the will of the people, expressed on behalf of an object just and politic. Still, it could not but be seen that, however desirable was that object and however beneficial its effect, it had been obtained in an unsatisfactory manner. It was proposed and carried by men who had spent the greater part of their political life in opposing it, and who even now did not profess to believe that it was right, but had only been convinced by violent agitation that it had become necessary. Such a course is dangerous to the character of statesmanship and to the honour of statesmen. Laws which are proposed by men who do not believe them to be essentially just and wise, can hardly commend themselves to the reverence, even if they secure the obedience, of the whole people. Yet the ministers who carried emancipation were beyond all question honest and honourable ; they would have scorned to do, for the sake of personal power or emolument, what they consented to undertake from a feeling

of duty. The country could not fail to see that if there was no other way in which the existing Parliamentary machinery could be got to execute such a necessary piece of work, it was time that a change was made in the instrument, in order that when it required such business to be transacted it could construct a Parliament and a Ministry ready to effect it willingly and conscientiously, and not from fear of violence or revolution.

Thus the effect of the action of the Government upon the state and the fortunes of political parties was twofold. It increased the disposition of ordinary people in favour of those constitutional reforms which had but a short time ago been branded as the wild schemes of Radicals, but were now being advocated more or less heartily by the Whigs. At the same time, it increased to the greatest possible extent that disaffection in the Tory ranks, that want of confidence in their leaders, which disabled them from presenting an unbroken front to the charges of the reformers. Where, indeed, could they look for certainty of action and consistency of counsel when Wellington and Peel had twice deserted the cause, and had even themselves led the attack upon the fortresses which they had been selected to defend? It was inevitable that the agitation for Parliamentary reform should rapidly increase, and that its friends should be encouraged by the success which had attended the efforts of the Dissenters and the Roman Catholics.

Little was done in that, or, indeed, in any other direction. Ill-feeling was perpetuated in Ireland by a clause in the Act intended to allay it—that, namely, which prevented O'Connell from sitting for Clare without taking that oath which was now repealed. The man who had been of all others most instrumental in effecting emancipation, and was thus singled out for an exhibition of revenge, was just the one to make the most of the ill-judged policy. He spoke with dignity and effect when pleading his cause before the House of Commons; he stormed and raged when protesting to his constituents against his exclusion; and altogether the affair served the

purpose only of those who had objects in view with regard to Irish politics, which could be served by keeping alive animosity to England and to the English Government. It became evident that when Irish members were elected, their sympathies would be in favour of that party which was opposed to the governing classes, alike amongst the Tories and the Whigs.

In the mean time, only a very faint sign of the coming reform struggle was given this session, when the Marquis of Blandford moved a resolution against the maintenance of close, decayed, and corrupt boroughs, and was defeated by 114 votes to 40. Hume once more contended against the use of corporal punishment in the army, but did not go to a division. The fact was, that all parties were exhausted by the excitement attending the great battle for religious liberty, and were glad when, as early as the 24th of June, Parliament was prorogued.

When, on the 4th of February, 1830, Parliament met for what was to be its last session, it met with its temper soured and its organization unsettled. The bulk of the Tory party had been shocked and irritated by what they considered the political treason of the ministers in accepting and forcing on the Emancipation Act. The recess had served only to deepen this feeling, and they had no desire to retain in power the men who had betrayed them. The Whigs, on the other hand, were not disposed to preserve a Government in which they had no share. On their part, ministers could make no approaches toward either a reconciliation with their old friends or a coalition with their old foes. There was, in the great question which everybody felt was coming up next for settlement, another case of the weakness and isolation of the Government. What was supposed to be the feeling of the offended Tories on this point may be gathered from the language of the compiler of the "Annual Register" for the year, a writer vehemently Conservative in opinion and outspoken in expression. Speaking of "the Tories, who had been disgusted by the conduct of ministers regarding the

Catholic Bill," he says, "Between them and the Whigs the distance now was at least not greater than between them and the Ministry, and the Whigs had never betrayed them ; and the unblushing disregard of the public voice of England and Scotland, which had been manifested in carrying through the Catholic Bill, had made, even among the opponents of that bill, converts to the question of Parliamentary reform—almost the only distinguishing legend that now remained visible on the banners of Whiggery." *

Amongst those who had thus been converted to a belief in reform by the action of Government was the Marquis of Blandford. He had been a strong opponent of emancipation, and thought he saw, in the facility with which Parliament had changed its opinions at the call of ministers, a sufficient reason for extending the direct representation of the people. He moved an amendment to the address in this sense, and on the 18th of February he asked leave to bring in a bill to provide for the disfranchisement from time to time of decayed or corrupt boroughs, and the enfranchisement of populous places in their stead. Lord Althorpe moved, as an amendment, "That it is the opinion of this House that a reform in the representation of the people is necessary," but both the amendment and Lord Blandford's motion were negatived. The proposals brought forward by the Whigs themselves during the session were not very violent. Another attempt was made, on the 11th of March, to transfer the seat from East Retford to Birmingham, but it was lost by twenty-seven votes, and the proposal to give the votes to the hundred carried. It was on this occasion that the serious attention of Parliament was called to the growth of those political unions which were giving expression to the national desire for reform, and organizing the people for the struggle to obtain it. Mr. Huskisson, in his speech on behalf of the enfranchisement of Birmingham, said, "He saw in Birmingham lately an association which, as far as he could perceive its elements, principles, and operations, seemed

* "Annual Register," 1830, p. 2.

exactly formed on the model of the Catholic Association ; for it had its subscriptions, its funds, its meetings, its discussions, and its agitator. The purpose of this association was to raise a universal cry for Parliamentary reform ; to carry the question by exaggerating the difficulties, abuses, and distresses of the country." Failing in the attempt to enfranchise a single town, Lord John Russell, on the 23rd of February, brought forward a proposal to enable Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham to return members to the House of Commons. This was supported by Huskisson, and, on a division, was lost by only forty-eight votes, the numbers being 188 to 140.

As a rule, the Radicals had been content to follow and support the Whigs in their mild proposals, but they had now obtained a colleague who would not take part in any such tactics. O'Connell was always for taking the most extreme course, and he hated the Whigs as heartily as he did the Tories. Accordingly, on the 28th of May he moved for leave to bring in a bill to establish triennial Parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot. These were only the same propositions which had been in the old days supported by Fox and his friends, but in proportion as the question of reform approached the time for its practical treatment, the dread which the moderates felt for any thorough scheme increased. Lord John Russell and Brougham protested against universal suffrage and the ballot, and Lord Althorpe, whilst not objecting to the ballot, strongly opposed universal suffrage. O'Connell was defeated by 332 votes to 13, and thereon Lord John Russell took occasion to move a series of four resolutions, of which the first three proposed to increase the number of members of the House ; to give members to large towns, and additional members to wealthy and populous counties ; and, to obviate the too great increase of members, to take from not more than sixty boroughs containing less than 2,500 inhabitants each, one of the members.

The last of the four resolutions contained a proposition so startling that it is scarcely credible now that it could ever have been seriously made by a responsible politician. It only

proved to what a system the evil of corruption had been reduced. In the eye of the law such practices had always been criminal, and the electors had a right to their votes free from any interference by compulsion or bribery, and numberless bills to prevent corruption had been introduced and passed. Now the very leader of the reform party of the Whigs came forward with a motion which recognized corruption, not as an offence to be suppressed, but as a right not to be extinguished without compensation. This fourth resolution was—"That it is expedient that compensation be granted to those boroughs that have been reduced to one member to serve in Parliament, by means of a fixed sum to be paid to them annually for a certain number of years." Nothing could add to the force of this resolution as a proof of the utter rottenness of the existing so-called representative system. The whole of the four resolutions were rejected by 213 votes to 117.

These various motions were rather indications of a future than parts of a present practical struggle. In the mean time, the opposition to the Ministry grew stronger, and their position more irksome. Whether or not they could, under ordinary circumstances, have lived through the session is doubtful, but the trial was destined not to be made, for on the 26th of June George IV. expired. Perhaps no man who had held so eminent a position in the world ever left it and caused so few regrets. There could scarcely be a single living person attached to the miserable being, either by affection or respect. Coarse, selfish, and insincere, depraved alike mentally and morally, it was a strong proof of the attachment of the people to their national institutions, that the appearance of personal loyalty could be preserved towards such a king. Of active influence in the policy of the country, such as that which, as long as he was sane, his father had exerted, he possessed nothing. Eldon had tried to make him use such power in the case of the Emancipation Act, but though ready to cry and moan like a child over the necessity which was imposed upon him, his cowardice and weakness made resist-

ance impossible. What he could do, and what he did, was to make the lives of his ministers unhappy, by the constant necessity of persuading or coercing him into the performance of the duties of his position. The most that could be said about his influence on actual affairs was that his death removed one reason for maintaining the Ministry in power, the determination and firmness of Wellington being no longer required to direct and control his nominal sovereign.

There was a general belief, soon to be confirmed by events, that the death of the King would lead to the death of the Government. The Whigs at once determined to make an end of the half-alliance, which, as it had led to no division of power or office, they were not likely to prolong. Declaration of war was made forthwith. The new King sent a message, which recommended Parliament to make such temporary provisions as might be requisite for the public service in the interval that would elapse before a new Parliament could be elected. There was in this advice a serious mistake, which might have resulted in grave national difficulties. The King, although in good health, was an old man, and the heir to the throne, the Princess Victoria, was a minor. That a Regency Bill should have been introduced before the dissolution was most desirable. How great the danger really was few people at the time understood ; certainly the nation at large did not know, until Hume, many years after, discovered and exposed what may well be called the Orange Conspiracy, with which the Duke of Cumberland, the person next in succession to the throne, was mixed up. All could see, however, that the course taken by ministers was imprudent, and the opposition made their objection to it the occasion of breaking up what agreement had before existed. The attempt to prolong the session to deal with the question was, however, defeated in both Houses, and on the 24th of July Parliament was dissolved.

Although the Whigs had endeavoured to postpone the dissolution, yet the time chosen for the election was especially auspicious for the cause of Liberalism. The agitation organized

by the political unions and other associations in favour of Parliamentary reform, had been increasing in earnestness, and the well-known weakness of the Government had encouraged the movement. This public feeling had been increased to a state of great excitement by the events which had been taking place in France and Belgium. All through the summer, the whole of Europe had been watching with the keenest interest the proceedings which were taking place in Paris ; the endeavours made by Charles X. and his ministers to destroy what constitutional liberties existed in France ; and the resistance which the chambers, the press, and the people offered to the attempt. The struggle culminated in the three days' revolution, which closed, on the 29th of July, in the triumph of the people and the expulsion of the King. This was just when the English constituencies were entering on that election contest which was to be the prelude of a revolution less violent, but not less important, than that which had occurred in France. The spirit of the reformers all over the kingdom was roused, and their exertions were encouraged by the victory in Paris, and they entered upon the campaign with a vigour which broke down the influence of territorial magnates and borough-mongers, and resulted in the return, for the first time in forty years, of a House of Commons in which the reforming element was predominant.

There had been great distress in the country for some time past, and this, whilst it predisposed the people to political change, urged some of them to turbulence and disorder. There were riots, rick-burning, machine-breaking, and other acts of violence which might draw attention to, but could not relieve, the prevalent suffering. It was under these conditions that the new Parliament met on the 26th of October, and, the preliminaries having been got through, the session was opened on the 2nd of November by the new King in person. In the royal speech there was one sentence which implied, rather than expressed, opposition to a reform of the Constitution. After speaking of the loyalty and attachment of the great body of his people, the King went on to say, " I am confident

that they justly appreciate the full advantage of that happy form of government under which, through the favour of Divine Providence, this country has enjoyed for a long succession of years a greater share of internal peace, of commercial prosperity, of true liberty, of all that constitutes social happiness, than has fallen to the lot of any other country of the world." This statement was soon challenged. Even before the address was moved, Brougham gave notice that he would submit a distinct proposition for a change in the representation. In the Lords, in the debate on the address, Earl Grey, referring to France and Belgium, said, "We ought to learn wisdom from what was passing before our eyes; and when the spirit of liberty was breaking out all around, it was our first duty to secure our own institutions by introducing into them a temperate reform. He felt persuaded that, unless we did so, we must make up our minds to witness the destruction of the Constitution. He had been a reformer all his life, and at no period had he been inclined to go farther than he would be prepared to go now if the opportunity were offered." This was a plain and a bold declaration, and it was answered by one equally as bold and far more extraordinary. The Duke of Wellington replied in a speech which has become historical, and which, alike from its tone and the time when it was spoken, could not but be taken as a defiance of the unmistakable wish of the bulk of the nation. He praised the existing state of the representation as being absolutely perfect, and as possessing the full and entire confidence of the country. Then, in conclusion, he said, "The representation of the people at present contains a large body of the property of the country in which the landed interests have a preponderating influence. Under these circumstances, I am not prepared to bring forward any measure of the description alluded to by the noble lord. I am not only not prepared to bring forward any measure of this nature, but I will at once declare, that as far as I am concerned, as long as I hold any station in the Government of the country, I shall always feel it my duty to resist such measures when proposed by others."

It was thus that issue was joined between the party of resistance and the party of progress. The first business of the reformer was to remove from his "station in the Government" the Prime Minister who misrepresented and opposed the opinion of the country. This was done on the 15th of November, when, on ministers bringing forward their proposals as to the civil list, in the House of Commons, an amendment was moved by Sir Henry Parnell for a select committee to take them into consideration. This was carried by 233 to 204, giving a majority of twenty-nine against Ministers. Next day they announced that they had tendered, and that his Majesty had accepted, their resignations. They afterwards declared that they came to this resolution not so much on account of the civil list vote as from an anticipation of the result of a division on Mr. Brougham's proposition for reform.* The King sent for Lord Grey, and he undertook to form an Administration on condition that he should have his Majesty's authority to make Parliamentary reform a Cabinet question. On this basis the Ministry was formed which framed and, after a long and fierce contest, ultimately carried that first great Act which, with all its defects and deficiency, yet did, nevertheless, give the national sanction to the principle that the House of Commons should not be composed of nominees of borough-mongers or of close corporations, but, to some extent at least, should represent the people in whose name it spoke, and on whose behalf it professed to act.

The Ministry which had to undertake this great work was composed mainly of Whigs and Canningites,† but on the

* "Annual Register," 1830, p. 163.

† The Ministry was first composed as follows:—

IN THE CABINET.

Earl Grey
Viscount Althorpe
Lord Brougham
Marquis of Lansdown
Lord Durham
Viscount Melbourne
Viscount Palmerston

Sir James Graham
Viscount Goderich
Lord Auckland
Charles Grant
Duke of Richmond
Lord Holland
Earl of Carlisle

question of reform the Premier himself, from his long advocacy of the subject and the importance which he gave to it, may be said to have been the guiding spirit. After the formation of the Government little was done in Parliament. The Regency Act was passed, and some necessary routine got through ; and on the 23rd of December both Houses adjourned to the 3rd of February, the long adjournment being declared necessary in order to enable ministers to prepare the various measures which they wished to submit, and more particularly the plan of reform, to which they were especially pledged. This last and greatest subject was immediately proceeded with. As soon as the Administration was definitely organized, Earl Grey appointed a committee to discuss the whole subject and report upon it to the Cabinet. " This committee consisted of Lord Durham, his own son-in-law, who was perfectly acquainted with Lord Grey's views on the subject ; of Lord Duncannon, who was supposed to be well versed in borough history and details, more especially in Ireland ; of Sir James Graham, who was popular with the more ardent reformers, and at that time deemed almost a *Radical* ; and of Lord John Russell, who had represented the Whig party in the House of Commons when dealing with the question of reform in his various proposals on the subject." *

The Houses reassembled on the 3rd of February, 1831 ; and on the 1st of March Lord John Russell introduced the Reform Bill in the Commons, and its provisions were for the

NOT IN CABINET.

Charles Wynn
Sir James Kempt
Duke of Devonshire
Marquis Wellesley
Earl of Albermarle
Marquis of Winchester
Lord John Russell
G. A. Ellis
C. P. Thompson
Sir T. Denman

Sir W. Horne

Ireland.

Marquis of Anglesey
Lord Plunkett
Sir John Byng
E. S. T. Stanley
E. Pennefather
P. Crampton

Lord Duncannon joined the Ministry afterwards.

* Roebuck's " History of the Whig Ministry of 1830," vol. ii. pp. 28, 29.

first time made known to the country. On the whole, the measure, as thus propounded, was received by Radicals in and out of Parliament with delight, and almost with surprise at its thorough-going character. There were principles which they considered important which were not recognized ; there were deficiencies in the methods that were adopted. The ballot, a shorter duration of Parliaments, and most especially a wider extension of the suffrage, were felt to be questions which had been unwisely neglected ; but, as Harriet Martineau says, "All agreed to relinquish their minor objects for a time, to secure the overthrow of borough corruption, and the great cry was raised which from that hour rang through the land for above a year—'The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill.' " *

From this time to the passing of the Act there is no separate history of the Radical party in Parliament. The determination to assist the Whigs in the prolonged effort to carry the great measure was practically unanimous.† It was the feeling outside which made it possible to break down the opposition of the Peers and the reluctance of the King, and outside the Radicals had the command of the devotion, and the direction of the energies, of the whole people. It was the popular enthusiasm thus aroused and sustained which supported ministers in their first defeat, sent back a strong and compact reform majority when Parliament was dissolved, and defeated even the resolution of the Duke of Wellington, although at one time it was said that he contemplated the possibility of using the army to suppress the people. It was this which induced the King to promise Lord Grey power to

* "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. ii. p. 32.

† There were two curious exceptions. *Orator* Hunt, who had defeated Mr. Stanley at Preston, vigorously denounced ministers and their proposition ; but no one regarded him as a serious element in politics. Sir R. Wilson, however, had long been a consistent Radical, but by some twist he constructed a principle out of a mere detail, and voted against Government on the amendment, which refused to allow of a diminution of the number of members of the House. The carrying of this led to a dissolution, and in the election following Wilson lost his seat for Southwark.

create peers sufficient to carry the bill, and convinced the Lords themselves that further resistance was impossible. So that it was truly a national, and not a party, victory which was completed, when on Thursday, June 7, 1832, the royal assent was given, and the Reform Bill became law.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST REFORMED PARLIAMENT (1833-1834).

ON the 16th of August, 1832, the last session of the last unreformed Parliament was closed. By the elections which followed, the extent and the position of the Radical party in the House of Commons were materially affected. Hitherto the Radical members had been regarded rather as the mouthpieces of outside opinion than as exercising any direct influence upon the proceedings of Parliament. For a long time to come they were destined to maintain the same place. They represented the wishes and the feelings of the people, they formulated and expressed the national desires, and they kept before Parliament the growing determination to obtain reforms in certain directions; but when the popular demands had reached a point at which they could no longer be resisted, the work of Liberal legislation was taken up, not by the men who had been responsible for its preparation and who believed in its principles, but by members of one or other of the old parties, who had to the last moment resisted the concession, but who still retained command of the majority of the constituencies. The Tories were almost as ready to make concessions as the Whigs; and the Whigs were quite as determined as the Tories to keep the power of the Government in the hands of the privileged classes to which they all belonged.

Yet in the first reformed Parliament there was a definite Radical party, returned as such by the electors, and recognized as such by the House. To ascertain why it was that this

party was so large, and, what is still more important, how it happened that it was not larger and more influential, it is necessary to see what the Reform Act really was, and what its authors intended it to be ; what it did, and what it left undone ; and how the classes which it enfranchised, and the constituencies which it manipulated, were capable of being managed and controlled.

The places from which the Radical party could be recruited were increased in number, but the increase was limited, and the possibility of growth small. It was in the large metropolitan and other new boroughs, in which there were not only a considerable number of working men enfranchised, but where the influence of public opinion could affect voters in other classes, that there was a chance for candidates who took that opinion for their guide, and who wished to gain for it wider and more direct expression in Parliament—men who desired that the government of the country should be for the people and by the people. Forty-two new boroughs were created, of which twenty-two were to return two members, and twenty were to return one member each. It was hoped that immediate gain would be derived from this source, and from a few of the older cities and boroughs, such as London, Westminster, Southwark, Liverpool, Bristol, and Newcastle. The chances of growth in the future were that many of the small boroughs which retained members might become more populous and more independent, and that in some of the grouped boroughs, especially in Scotland and Wales, territorial influence might be divided, and in some might be overcome. Only from the last-named direction has the assistance really come.

On the other side, the probability of increased strength from the counties was cut off by the operation of the Chandos Clause, which, by giving votes to occupiers of £50 value and upwards, practically made the landowners paramount. Some of the Radicals—and Roebuck was amongst them *—hoped that this influence might in time be overcome, and that the tenant farmers would vote in accordance with their own views and

* "History of the Whig Ministry," vol. ii. p. 198.

interests rather than at the command of their landlords ; but this expectation has not yet been realized. Whilst the territorial power was thus made stronger, the area of its operation was increased by the additional members given to counties. Out of the total number of seats to be appropriated, sixty-five were allotted to county constituencies, and the Tories mainly, and at the best the Conservative section of the Whigs, were permanently strengthened to that extent. In what were retained of the small nomination boroughs, in which the great families were as powerful as in the counties, the Radicals had little hope. The Whigs had, in their treatment of these constituencies, been almost undisguisedly influenced by party considerations ; but in spite of this arrangement there were many of such nomination seats left in the hands of the Tories, and in all of them, as in the counties, the tendency has been for the holders of such power to grow ever more Conservative, and to give support to the party opposed to change.

The strength and the weakness of the Radicals were defined by these conditions. Supposing that they obtained the whole of the seats for the popular boroughs, they could never be numerous enough to form and maintain an administration. But these constituencies were naturally far from being unanimous ; some of them were eventually found to be Whig, and some even Tory, so that the Radicals could not command a force great enough and united enough to regularly make an impression on the Whig policy. This state of things led to a condition of disorganization and of individual instead of combined action, which has been said to be the cause, but was in reality quite as much the consequence, of the weakness of the party in Parliament. Another influence which served to increase this want of solidarity in the party, was the entire absence of official or even Parliamentary experience amongst its members. Now and again it occurred that when the Radicals acquired this experience they were admitted into the charmed circle of Whig officialism, not as Radicals, but as Liberals, and their old colleagues were often more vexed by what they considered desertion

than pleased at the influence they might exercise on ministers. This period of isolation is an inevitable stage in the history of any political or social organization, and is continued longest when men are most impressed with the importance of the principles to which they are devoted, and which they fear to injure by any compromise even on the details of administration.

The relation of the Whigs towards the Radicals in this respect has already gone through three stages. The first was that in which the governing class refused to reckon the popular party at all as a source from which the Government was to be drawn or from which the ideas of government were to be derived. The second was when the importance of individual Radicals was recognized, not only on account of their personal ability, but because of their representative character; but when they were still admitted not to affect the policy, but to strengthen the position of the Whigs. The third stage, which has only been very recently reached, was when not only the persons but the principles of Radicals were admitted into the highest counsels of the Liberal party, and the men were expected not only to support measures in Parliament, but to help to frame them in Cabinets. In all these cases the nation has been the gainer by the increase of the influence of those who have most directly represented the popular wishes—who have striven to widen and improve its institutions, and to increase the social, the intellectual, and the political liberties of the people.

The actual gain in numbers, and in influence, to the Radical party immediately following the passing of the Reform Act, has been variously estimated. In a work to which reference has been before made ("The Parliaments of England from first of George I. to the present time," by Henry Stooks Smith), the third volume of which was published in 1850, an attempt has been made at party classification, founded, as it appears, on the recorded views of candidates and local records and opinions. In this book the number of avowed or recognized Radicals in the first reformed House of Commons, elected in 1832, is given as forty-six, of which

there are eighteen English, one Scotch, and twenty-seven Irish members. In the next Parliament, elected in 1835, there are recorded nineteen English, two Scotch, and thirty Irish Radicals.* This list does not accord with the generally received opinions. Speaking of the state of things after 1832, Sir Erskine May says, "The Radical reformers or Radicals, long known as an active party in the country, had at length gained a footing in the House of Commons, where they had about fifty representatives."† The estimate made by Harriet Martineau is much higher. Speaking of the time of the dissolution in 1837, she says, "From the beginning of the reform struggle the number of Radical reformers in the House had never been less than seventy or eighty; and in the last Parliament they had been one hundred and fifty. It was strange that they had not yet been a powerful party; and it would be stranger still if they did not become so now."‡

The difficulty of arriving at any definite calculation of numbers arises from the fact, that although at that time the Radicals were thought of as separated from the Whigs, it was rather as individuals than as a distinct Parliamentary party. They had no formal organization, no acknowledged leaders who could call with authority for a display of their full power, and they made no pretence to any official position in the Government. One special element of uncertainty was the action of the Irish members, who formed, numerically, an important contingent of the force. Their votes were only given in full number on some few of the broader questions of national politics; and where they were allied to the most Liberal section, that is, on ecclesiastical subjects, the union in action was not based on agreement in principle. The English Radicals attacked the Irish Church from the side of religious liberty; the Irish members had mainly in view the interests and rights of Roman Catholicism. On another

* Although evidently incomplete, the lists are interesting, and the names given as Radicals in the Parliaments of 1832 and 1835, and the constituencies they represented, are set out in an Appendix.

† "Constitutional History," vol. ii. p. 60.

‡ "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. ii. p. 351.

point, too, there was still further divergence. There could be no constant and permanent alliance without something like mutual sympathy on the matters which the several parties regarded as essential. But the English members could not repay Irish support by votes in favour of the principal object on which the latter were most in earnest. O'Connell had raised the banner of repeal, and to that flag no English Radicals could rally. They could not, therefore, on any special English question make a claim on the united loyalty of the Irish members.

From these various causes, even the divisions taken in the House are not conclusive as to the real strength of the party, and they vary considerably; yet on the whole they form the only trustworthy guide on the subject. Those which took place in the first sessions were very characteristic of the state of parties. The first that was called for in the reformed Parliament was pressed for by some of the Radicals on account of what they thought a desertion of principle by the Government in the choice of a Speaker. Mr. Manners Sutton, the Speaker in the former Parliament, had been selected by Tory ministers as a Tory president of a Tory House. There was naturally a feeling of surprise and regret when the reform Ministry decided to propose him as Speaker in the Liberal House. Loyalty to the Government restrained all but the most determined Radicals, and the first division list is interesting as showing how many of these there were. Hume proposed Mr. Littleton, in opposition to the old Speaker, and on a division obtained 31 votes against 241.* Amongst

* The following formed the minority:—

Baldwin, D. H.	Gaskell, D.	Potter, Richard
Beauclerk, Major A. W.	Grote, George	Roche, William
Bowes, J.	Hume, J.	Roe, James
Bulwer, E. L.	Hutt, W.	Roebuck, J. A.
Butler, Hon. P.	Kinlock, G	Romilly, J.
Cobbett, W.	Lloyd, J. H.	Strutt, Edward
Dykes, F. L. B.	Lynch, A. H.	Sutton, Rt. Hon. C. M.,
Evans, George	Nagle, Sir R.	<i>Speaker.</i>
Ewart, W.	O'Connell, Daniel	Vigors, N. A.
Faithful, G.	O'Connell, John	
Fielden, W. J.	O'Connell, Morgan	Warburton, Henry, <i>Teller.</i>

these thirty-one was the late Speaker, who of course is not to be reckoned with the Radicals. Another challenge was given on the address, when amendments were moved by O'Connell and Tennyson, both taking exception to the Irish coercion clauses in the royal speech. Tennyson's amendment declared, "That if, under the circumstances which may be disclosed to us, we should be induced to entrust his Majesty with additional powers, we shall feel it our duty to accompany that acquiescence in his Majesty's wishes by a close and diligent investigation into the causes of discontent in Ireland." For this there were, including tellers, sixty-two votes, including thirty-four Irish and twenty-eight English members.*

These divisions may be taken as representing the pure or thorough Radical vote, but there were occasions on which the Radical element in the Whig party was also represented. The most important of these in the first session was that caused by Grote's resolution in favour of the ballot. The new member introduced the motion in a speech which not only conferred honour on the speaker, but strengthened the party to which he was attached. On a division, there were 106 Ayes and 211 Noes. In addition there were twenty-six members who paired in favour of the ballot, so that the total force on this decidedly Radical question, brought forward by an avowed Radical, was 132, or, adding tellers, 134, justifying the highest estimate which has been formed of its strength.

Even more important than the numbers of the Radical party at this new starting-point in its history, were the character, ability, and position of its members. Important

* The English votes were the following :—

Attwood, T.	Grote, G.	Palmer, Gen.
Beauclerk, Major E.	Harvey, D. W.	Philips, Mark
Brotherton, James	Hume, J.	Potter, R.
Butler, C.	Humphrey, J.	Roebuck, J. A.
Cobbett, W.	Hutt, William	Wallace, R.
Faithful, G.	Kennedy, J.	Warburton, Henry
Fielden, John	Kinlock, G.	
Fryer, R.	Lloyd, J. H.	Bulwer, E. L. }
Gaskell, D.	Molesworth, Sir W.	Tennyson, C. } <i>Tellers.</i>

these were, not only to the party, but to the nation. Whatever might be their power and influence for the moment in Parliament, they were men by whom the future policy of the country would be decided. It was by them and under their direction that those questions were introduced and explained to the people, which, after being supported by outside agitation, were finally forced upon a reluctant legislature. It was of the first consequence that these men, who stood at the ^{head} of the party of progress, should not only be inspired by popular enthusiasm, but should possess such practical ability as would enable them to convert political ideas into actual working proposals, and give confidence to those who had been taught to suspect as theorists all who ventured into new and untried paths.

As to the manner in which these requirements were met, there was quite as much difference of opinion amongst those who ought to have been competent to judge as there was about the numerical strength of the party. Examples of these divergent views are worth consulting. And first we may take the sublime self-superiority of the man in society, who looks upon the millions of people who are outside the ruling class as scarcely worthy of notice. Greville, the one-time clerk to the Privy Council, writing in his diary at the time, says, "In the mean time, the reformed Parliament has been sitting for a fortnight or so, and begins to manifest its character and pretensions. The first thing that strikes one is its inferiority, in point of composition, to preceding Houses of Commons, and the presumption, impertinence, and self-sufficiency of the new members. Formerly new members appeared with some modesty and diffidence, and with some appearance of respect for the assembly into which they were admitted; these fellows behave themselves as if they had taken it by storm, and might riot in all the insolence of victory. There exists no *party* but that of the Government: the Irish act in a body under O'Connell to the number of about forty; the Radicals are scattered up and down without a leader, numerous, restless, turbulent, and bold—Hume, Cobbett, and a multitude such

as Roebuck, Faithful, Buckingham, Major Beauclerk, etc. (most of whom have totally failed in point of speaking)—bent upon doing all the mischief they can, and incessantly active.” *

What we may call the official Whig view may come next. Sir Erskine May says of the Radicals, “Without organization or unity of purpose, and with little confidence in one another, with a ^{pany} were often found in combination against the Government. and, in addition to this body, the great towns recently enfranchised, and places suddenly relieved from the thralldom of patronage and close corporations, had returned a new class of reformers, having little sympathy with the old Whigs. These men had sprung from a different source; they had no connection with the aristocracy, and no respect for the constitutional Whig party. Their political views were founded upon principles more democratic, and experience of the restraints and compromises of public affairs had not yet taught them moderation.” †

Let us turn to an account more philosophical, and which, even if it be somewhat too eulogistic, had the essential truth only to be gained by some sympathy with the principles which actuated the Radicals and the objects for which they were striving. Harriet Martineau writes—“These Radical reform members were men of conscience, of enlightenment, of intellectual ability and moral earnestness, of good station, and, generally speaking, of independent fortune. They were so unlike the vulgar Tory misrepresentation of them—so far from being destructives and demagogues—that the sober-minded of the community might more reasonably trust them for the conservation of property than either the Conservatives or the Whigs. . . . There was no other party which, in 1837, was known to include such men as Grote, and Molesworth, and Roebuck, and Colonel Thompson, and Joseph Hume, and William Ewart, and Charles Buller, and Ward, and Villiers, and Bulwer, and Strutt;—such a phalanx of strength

* “Greville Memoirs,” vol. ii. p. 360.

† “Constitutional History of England,” vol. ii. pp. 60, 61.

as these men, with their philosophy, their science, their reading, their experience, the acuteness of some, the doggedness of others, the seriousness of most, the mirth of a few, might have become, if they could have become a phalanx at all." *

The party of which such divergent opinions were formed, as regarded alike their voting power and their character and ability, entered on the work of legislation with a vigour unchecked by official responsibility, and a hopefulness untamed by Parliamentary experience. They represented the people who had just been enfranchised, and electors and members alike supposed that the enfranchisement was intended, not as an end, but as a means for obtaining practical reforms. They were too sanguine in their expectations, too trustful of the official Liberals, and anxious to do more than was possible in the time. The lesson had to be learned, and it was not long before it was forced upon them, that their work was not at first to pass measures through Parliament, but to prepare the country for them, and to lead the agitations which should enforce success. This was not a pleasant revelation for men who were deeply impressed with the grievances which existed, and the remedies which were required. What hurt them most was the resistance which they met with from the ministerial party, who owed their position to the popular enthusiasm. This gave rise to feelings of animosity against the Whigs, which sometimes found an exaggerated expression, but which yet was the natural result of disappointed hopes. Thus, if the Whigs regarded the Radicals as unreasonable demagogues, the Radicals returned the compliment by treating the ministerialists as no better than Tories. One of the most brilliant, the most active, and, it must be added, the most bitter of them said, "The Whigs have ever been an exclusive and aristocratic faction, though at times employing democratic principles and phrases as weapons of offence against their opponents. It is the fashion of the writers who advocate their cause and eulogize their party, to describe them as representing the

* "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. ii. pp. 351, 352.

principle of advance and change, in the hope of improvement, which must be ever acting with a people who are themselves continually improving ; but this assumption is not justified by experience. The Whigs employ the phrases of liberality upon compulsion. They are liberal because they need some means of exciting the nation. When out of office they are demagogues ; in power they become exclusive oligarchs. In the one case and the other, they pursue without scruple what they believe to be their party interest.” *

This feeling of antagonism between the most active Radicals and the Whigs did not correspond with any sharp line, either in principles or policy, between the two parties. There were many causes which led to union rather than to separation. The difference between the division lists on some of the questions points to the most important of these causes—the fact that there was a growing tendency towards Liberalism amongst nearly all classes of politicians. This fact was marked by the change of name which was now adopted by both the old parties. Whigs and Tories became Liberals and Conservatives.† On the part of the Whigs, the change had become desirable on account of the new element which had been introduced into Parliament by the operation of the Reform Act. It would have been impossible for them to carry on the Government if the Radicals had been in permanent opposition. It was necessary, therefore, to recognize the fact that there was a party of progress, of which different sections were anxious to proceed at different rates, but all were prepared for advance of some kind. The title of Liberal answered to what the Whigs required ; it could be applied as a description of, and used as a rallying cry to, all opponents of Toryism. When there was a division which threatened the existence of the Ministry, it might be represented as a violation of party loyalty for the extreme section of the Liberals to desert their more moderate colleagues. This instrument, it will be found,

* Roebuck's "History of the Whig Ministry of 1830," vol. ii. pp. 405, 406.

† The changes are well described in Spencer Walpole's "History of England from 1815," vol. iii. pp. 135, 136.

has been used to the utmost by Whig statesmen ; but although the organization of Radicalism has been hindered by it, the thing itself has not been destroyed.

On their part, the Tories had suffered even more than their rivals from the endeavour to ignore or suppress the Liberalism of some of their members. The attempts of men like Eldon and Sidmouth and Wellington to resist all change, had led to the secession of Canning and Huskisson, of Goderich and Palmerston, and had culminated in making the Reform Act much more effective and far-reaching than it would have been if the resistance at first had been less vehement. If this loss of members, of intelligence, and of popular tendencies, was not to be made continual and utterly ruinous, it was necessary to stop it by recognizing the fact that reaction was impossible, and mere obstruction a mistake. Peel was wise enough to see this, and his party of Conservatives, therefore, was not reduced by deserters to the Liberals, but, on the other hand, was strengthened by the sympathy of the more conservative of the Whigs. Even he could not foretell the strength of the national stream which was setting towards Liberalism, and which was to carry him faster than the bulk of the party which he anxiously tried to prepare for some movement.

The position of the Radicals, then, was this : they were numerous enough to make themselves important to the Ministry, and they had behind them the full force of the popular agitation which could be raised on any great question. On the other hand, whilst admission to the Government was impossible, they could not force the Whigs beyond a certain line, because there was always the Conservative vote to appeal to against what might be stigmatized as revolutionary proposals. It is not surprising that they did not at once understand the full meaning of their position, and that in consequence they were more eager for action and more sanguine of success than the realities of the case warranted. At all events, they so far justified their claim to be the representatives of public opinion, that in the first session of the new Parliament they raised in one form or other nearly every great question which

has since become the subject of national endeavour, has been the occasion of party strife, and has led to the formation and destruction of Ministries.

First we must look at the measures which the Government proposed and carried. For the rapid success of these they were indebted to the public spirit which had carried the Reform Act and elected the new Parliament. So evidently was this influence at work that some of the most important of the proposals were forced on them from outside their own ranks. This was the case with the Acts which abolished two sorts of slavery, that of the factory children at home, and that of the negroes in the colonies. Human life and human rights were acquiring a higher place in the consideration of statesmen. The cause of religious liberty received an impetus, the effect of which has never been exhausted, by the discussions attending the passing of the Irish Church Bill.* Besides these things, the Bank Charter had been revised, and the government of the great Indian Empire had been reconstructed. In addition there had been a committee appointed to inquire into municipal corporations, the first step towards the great reform in local government which was subsequently effected. This was in reality an enormous amount of work to have been accomplished in a single session, and one in which much time had been unhappily spent over the Irish Coercion Bill, and it has since been regarded as a great achievement† which was made possible only by the political enthusiasm of the time. Yet neither the public feeling nor that of the Radicals was satisfied with what had been done, and the Ministry rather declined in popularity from what was left undone, than gained in credit by that which was effected.

The dissatisfaction of the popular party was caused to some extent by positive acts of the Government, especially

* "The germ of that principle upon which, thirty-five years later, the disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland was based, dates from 1833."—"Personal life of George Grote," p. 86.

† "No previous Administration had ever accomplished so many reforms as the Grey Cabinet had effected in a year."—Spencer Walpole's "History of England from 1815," vol. iii. p. 209.

by the introduction of the Coercion Bill for Ireland, and the mutilation of the Church Bill by the withdrawal of the appropriation clause. So far the discontent was justifiable ; but as to the sins of omission, it must be admitted that the Radicals strove for and expected more than it was possible to achieve in the time. They had not yet accepted their position as pioneers of, and agitators for, thoroughly Liberal measures ; their early disappointment perhaps made them too willing to accept it in the future, when they continued to maintain in power ministers whom they might honourably either have compelled to make progress, or have left the Conservatives to deal with. In this first session, however, they developed a programme sufficiently comprehensive. With respect to political liberty and constitutional reform, besides Grote's motion on the ballot, which has been already referred to, a good fight was made on a resolution proposed by Tennyson in favour of a bill to shorten the duration of Parliament, for which 164 votes were given to 213 against. In this case if the Ministry had not obtained Tory votes they would have been beaten, and this was an experience which they often had to undergo.

Religious liberty was made the subject of nearly constant discussion. The most strenuous efforts were made by the Radicals to prevent the injury to the Irish Church Bill. But they went further than this, for on the 16th of April Faithful, one of the members for Brighton, introduced resolutions declaring that the Church of England as by law established was not recommended by practical utility ; that its revenues have always been subject to legislative enactments ; and that the greater part, if not the whole, of these revenues ought to be appropriated to the relief of the nation. These resolutions were seconded by Cobbett, but were negatived without a division. A bill for the removal of Jewish disabilities was carried through the Commons, but rejected by the Lords—the first of a series of proceedings of the kind.

The "Annual Register" for the year 1833 says that "there was nothing in regard to which more lively hopes had been

excited in the great mass of the people than the corn laws." * An attempt to realize these hopes was made by Mr. Whitmore, who, on the 17th of May, moved a resolution to amend the corn laws by substituting in their stead a moderate duty, fixed at all periods except those of extreme dearth. Once more the reform Ministry led the Tories and their own Whig followers into the lobby against the advocates of the popular desires. Lord Althorpe, in a speech which did not attempt to deal with the merits of the case, but objected to the time at which it had been brought forward, moved the previous question, which was carried by a majority of 305 to 206, numbers which proved the interest which attached to the subject. Another motion was made on the 18th of June to bring in a bill to alter the corn laws, but it was defeated.

Questions which touched personal liberty were not likely to be overlooked by the Parliament which resolved to abolish negro slavery at a cost to the nation of twenty millions sterling. Hume, the indefatigable, repeated his annual proposal to abolish flogging in the army, and lost it by only a narrow majority, the numbers being 140 for and 151 against. A still nearer approach to victory was obtained on the 15th of August by Buckingham, who moved for the abolition of the impressment of seamen, for which he obtained fifty-four votes, whilst only fifty-nine voted against.

It was not likely that the old friends of economy and purity in the administration of the national finances would lessen their exertions when their influence had been so much increased. A considerable amount of time was spent in discussions on this subject, which were rendered at once more vehement and more important from the excited state of public opinion. It had been the generally expressed view, during the reform agitation, that a more representative Parliament would lead to such improvements in method and principle of finance as would effect an immediate and appreciable relief from the burdens of taxation. This expectation could not be realized, and there was a conflict between the agricultural and the

commercial interests as to the direction in which relief was most urgently required. The malt tax on the one side, and the assessed taxes, especially the house and window taxes, on the other, were declaimed against, and ministers used one set of agitators against the other in order to defeat both. In connection with these discussions, the first illustration was given of the relation which the ministerial party intended to hold towards any Radicals who might aspire to or accept office, and the opinions which the great constituencies would entertain of that relation and its consequences. Sir J. C. Hobhouse had been, since his first election for Westminster in 1820, an active and consistent Radical. He had on more than one occasion taken a prominent part in the effort to obtain the repeal of the house and window tax. On the formation of the Grey Ministry he accepted office, and he had now to pay the price. There ought to have been no difficulty in such a case in his retaining office whilst continuing his policy with regard to these particular imposts, a policy which was well known when he entered the Ministry. That course, however, was not taken; he could not, it appeared, act independently, and so he took a step which elicited a remarkable expression of public opinion. He did not vote for the repeal of the taxes, and so he determined to resign at once his office and his seat for Westminster.

If the resignation had been brought about by his adhesion to his old principles at the cost of relinquishing office, he would have been sure of a cordial response from his constituents. It was meant, however, as a request that his desertion of his old opinions might be condoned, and the request was indignantly denied. When he came forward for re-election, the electors voted "That Sir F. Burdett and Sir J. C. Hobhouse—the one by opposing the strongly expressed wishes of his constituents, and the other by deserting his post of duty when his services were most needed—had forfeited the confidence of the electors of Westminster." This resolution was carried out on the poll, Colonel De Lacy Evans, an avowed Radical, defeating the ministerialist by 2027 votes to 1835.

Some advance was made in the way of economical reform. On the 14th of February Hume moved—"That it is the opinion of this House that the utmost attention to economy in all branches of public expenditure is at all times a great and important duty," and "That it is the opinion of this House that sinecure offices, and offices held by deputy in the army and navy, are unnecessary and inexpedient as a means of remunerating public services." Ministers accepted the first resolution, which was merely declaratory; but on the second they moved the previous question, and had a majority of 232 to 138. The contest, however, was not over. On the 18th of April the Government agreed to accept two resolutions, proposed by Hume, that no future vacancies of sinecure offices should be filled up, and that no person should receive an appointment to any situation to which emolument is attached, the duties of which are to be performed by deputy. The acceptance of these resolutions was a surrender so far as principle was concerned, but the reformers were not content with a merely nominal victory. So on the 16th of July Mr. Ruthven, an Irish Radical, moved a resolution which asserted—"That, in justice to the people who pay taxes, all sinecure places should be abolished throughout the British Empire," and this was carried against ministers by a majority of nine. These were not empty victories, for they resulted in the abolition of more than thirteen hundred places.*

A subject perhaps more important than any of those previously mentioned, not only as regards the social condition and the personal happiness of the people, but as affecting their political status—that of national education—was now accepted by the Radical leaders as a part of their recognized political scheme. Brougham had made this subject his own in previous Parliaments, but his removal to the upper House, and the claims of his official duties, left the way open for other advocates. The first step was taken in unison by two members of the advanced party, who represented two of its best characteristics. Roebuck was at that time keenly alive to all

* "Personal Life of George Grote," p. 86.

popular sympathies, and was as ready in action as he was quick in intellectual apprehension. Grote was at once a master in scholarship and a deep philosophical thinker, especially in that best school of historic science which lays the firmest foundation for political experiment. The two men united to bring the subject of education before the new Parliament. On the 30th of July Roebuck moved and Grote seconded a resolution that the House would, "early next session, proceed to devise a means for the universal and national education of the whole people." The scheme which he propounded included the main elements on which alone any national system could be based ; it proposed compulsory attendance, the division of the country into school districts, a popular election of local managers, a special education rate, and the appointment of a member of the Cabinet as minister of public instruction. The resolution was, on the request of Lord Althorpe, withdrawn without a division ; but its discussion, no doubt, assisted to induce Government to propose, later in the session, a vote of £20,000 in aid of public education, which was the first step in the long and tedious process by which we have at length reached a national system. Parliament was prorogued on the 29th of August, the session having been the longest, as well as the most important, of modern times.

The new session commenced on the 4th of February, 1834. There was, of course, no alteration in the numerical strength of parties, but in other respects there was a marked difference. It was felt, both by their friends and their enemies, that the position of ministers had undergone a marked change for the worse, as regarded their command of the confidence of Parliament, and their hold upon the public opinion of the country, since they first met the reformed House twelve months before. Reasonable or unreasonable it might be, but there was no doubt that this feeling really existed. During the early part of the session the Government did nothing to remove this unfavourable impression, nothing to show that they had an active policy and were prepared to carry it out. It was known not only that

Ministers were weak, but that they were not agreed among themselves on those very Irish questions which had been the cause of their loss of popularity. The Tories were not anxious for any ministerial movement ; their purpose in all ways was best served by an inaction which prevented what they thought mischief, whilst it discredited their opponents.

The Radicals, for their part, were active enough, but for some time their actions were restricted to resolutions directed to subjects to which it was desirable that attention should be invited, but on which definite legislation was scarcely expected. The divisions, therefore, furnished no guide to the extent of the loss, if any, which ministers had suffered ; they were of a sort where Whig help of any kind was unlikely. Thus, on the 25th of February, Mr. Pryme raised a subject which has recently attracted more of the national attention which it so well deserves, by moving that the committee on every inclosure scheme shall in their report certify whether a portion of land is reserved to be let as allotments at low rents to all labourers in the parish who desire it. For this proposal there were 31 votes, against 136. Household suffrage for the counties was not then within view. On the 13th of March Mr. Rippon moved that the bishops ought to be excluded from the House of Lords, and some surprise was expressed that so many as 58 members should vote for such a proposition. The Noes were 125.

Another matter in which the predominance of the Church was concerned had a different fate in the Commons. Petitions had been presented to both Houses, from some members of the senate of Cambridge University, for the abolition of religious tests as a necessity before taking degrees. Short debates on the subject took place on the presentation of the petitions, and on the 17th of April Colonel Williams moved resolutions in favour of the abolition of tests. On this Wood moved, as an amendment, for leave to bring in a bill for the purpose, which was carried by 185 to 44. The second reading was carried on the 30th of June, by 321 to 174, Peel opposing ; and on the 28th of July—by which time the Ministry had been remodelled—the bill was read a third time,

and passed by a majority of 164 to 75. It was, of course, rejected by the Peers, there being neither time, nor force of public opinion, enough to induce their lordships to consent.

There was yet another Church question raised on which the Whig ministers, anxious to please the dissenters without alienating churchmen, failed to satisfy either party. On the 18th of March Dinett moved a resolution for the abolition of church rates, when Lord Althorpe said that, as he had given notice of a Government measure on the subject he should oppose the resolution, and it was therefore withdrawn. On the 21st of April Althorpe moved his resolution, "that after a fixed time church rates should cease and determine, and in lieu thereof a sum not exceeding £250,000 should be granted from the land tax, to be applied to the expenses of the fabrics of churches and chapels in such a manner as Parliament should direct." It was an indication of the want of sympathy of the Whigs with the public feeling that they either did not themselves see, or thought the dissenters would not see, that this proposal, instead of being one of favour to Nonconformity, was in reality a strengthening of the establishment, and that to propose to transfer the burden from local to imperial taxation was a mere pretence of relief. The dissenters knew exactly what the proposal meant, and they immediately raised a strong opposition, which was well expressed by Hume in the debate. Ministers carried their resolution by 246 to 140 votes, but they proceeded in the matter no further.

The Government seemed quite as little able to enter into the feelings of the dissenters with respect to their objections to the marriage laws, and therefore proposed a bill which contained in a striking form the worst feature of the old plan. The measure which they introduced provided that marriages might be celebrated by dissenting ministers on proof that the banns had been published in church. It was really absurd to offer to those who asked for religious equality with regard to the civil act of marriage, a proposal which contained the glaring condition of inferiority, or subjection, involved in the

fact that a ceremony performed by a church minister was necessary in order to make the act of a dissenter legal. The bill was of course dropped, but the fact of its having been introduced helped to alienate from the Government the support of an important section of the Liberals. Exactly on the same lines, followed by the same fate, and leading to the same result, was the ministerial proposal for the commutation of tithes, which was made on the 15th of April, but not proceeded with.

The feeling in the country which led, in the first place to the introduction, and afterwards to the defeat of these proposals, must be borne in mind when we consider why the Irish Church question was again forced into prominence by the Radicals, and why it had such a disastrous effect upon the constitution of the Ministry. The desertion of the appropriation clause in the Act of last session had shocked and irritated this party, and they were determined to bring the subject forward again and ensure for it that complete discussion which had been evaded by the ministerial tactics. They were encouraged in this course by the dissensions amongst ministers, which had been openly exhibited in the debate on the Irish Tithe Bill on the 2nd of May. Accordingly Ward gave notice that on the 27th of May he would move the following resolution :—"That the Protestant episcopal establishment in Ireland exceeds the spiritual wants of the Protestant population ; and that, it being the right of the State to regulate the distribution of Church property in such a way as Parliament may determine, it is the opinion of this House that the temporal possessions of the Church of Ireland, as now established by law, ought to be reduced."

This resolution, thorough both as to principle and application, was framed, it was supposed, after more than usual deliberation and consultation amongst the Radicals. It was believed that one of its objects was to force the Premier to strengthen his Ministry by the introduction of more Radical members.* What seemed clear was, that whatever fate befel

* Spencer Walpole's "History of England," vol. iii. note 2, on p. 252.

the motion some reconstruction of the Cabinet must follow. Russell, who had accepted the principle of appropriation, would without doubt vote against Stanley, who repudiated it. The uncertainty was not dispelled until the eventful 27th, and until the leader entered the House he was not informed of the decision come to by some of his colleagues. Ward had risen to propose his resolution,* when Althorpe intervened to request the House to adjourn, in consequence of circumstances which had come to his knowledge since he entered. The adjournment was agreed to, and it was soon known that the circumstances referred to by Althorpe were the resignations of four members of the Cabinet—Richmond, Ripon, Graham, and Stanley. It had been all along understood that neither of these ministers would assent to the proposition made by Ward, and it was feared that their secession might lead to the entire disruption of the Administration. A compromise had been proposed by Brougham, in the appointment of a commission to inquire into the state of the Irish Church, and report on the relation between the provision it made and the requirements it had to meet, and the cost of its maintenance. Such a compromise was, however, quite unacceptable to Stanley and his friends, since it would commit them to the very action they opposed if the inquiry resulted in the manner which seemed inevitable. They therefore persisted in retiring, and their places in the Cabinet were filled up by Lords Carlisle, Conyngham, and Auckland, and Mr. Spring Rice.

By the 2nd of June, the date to which the adjournment was made, the changes had been completed, and the Ministry were united on the policy which they were prepared to submit. They were, although united, weakened on one side of their supporters without having gained strength on the other. The compromise which had failed to conciliate Stanley and Graham did not commend itself to Ward and Grote. When Althorpe announced the reconstruction of the Cabinet, he

* The speeches of Ward in moving, and of Grote in seconding, the resolution were reported, but Mrs. Grote says they were never really delivered ("Personal Life of George Grote," p. 90.)

requested that Ward's resolution should be withdrawn, to await the precise information which the commission was to collect. The Radicals refused to accede to this request. They said that they did not consider the tenure in office of ministers as being secure, and that the manner in which the appropriation clause of the previous year had been dealt with rendered it impossible to trust the Government without a declaration of principle by the House. Lord Althorpe thereupon moved the previous question, which, after a long debate, was carried by 396 to 120, the minority being of course composed of English Radicals and Irish members. Ward and Grote and their friends were much blamed by the Whigs for endangering the position of the Ministry by an abstract resolution, but it was not long before they followed the example, and by the same kind of instrument overturned the Peel government.

The Church was not the only Irish subject on which ministers were divided, and as to which their policy was unpopular; it was the proceedings with regard to the Coercion Bill which led to the actual break-up, and to Earl Grey's retirement from official life. The Act of the last session would expire in August, 1834, and the Government had to decide if they would ask for the continuance of the whole or any part of it. There was not only difference of opinion in the Cabinet; there was conflicting advice, given at various times by the same people. Lord Wellesley, the Lord-Lieutenant, at one time recommended the re-enactment of all the clauses; then that those relating to courts-martial, and, again, those prohibiting public meetings, should be omitted. These varying counsels appealed to the sympathies of different sections of the Ministry, and the decisions were consequently uncertain. At one period it was so far understood that moderate opinions would prevail that Littleton, the chief secretary, actually gave O'Connell to understand that the two sets of clauses referred to would be excluded, and the great agitator refrained for some time from action in consequence. Eventually, however, Grey decided to go on with

the whole of last year's Act ; O'Connell had to be informed of this, and the inevitable storm arose.

It was on the 3rd of July, two days after the renewing bill had been introduced into the House of Lords by the Premier, that the scene took place in the Commons. Explain it as they might, it was now evident to all the world that there had been divisions in the Cabinet, and it was impossible to conceal who were the members who had advised the more moderate policy. Grey himself was not one of these, for when Lord Durham, upon the second reading in the Lords on the 4th of July, objected to the clauses relating to public meetings, the Prime Minister declared that if he could not have introduced the bill with those clauses he would not have proposed it at all. On the other hand, Lord Althorpe, the leader and mainstay of the party in the Commons, knew that his opinions, which differed from those of his chief, were public property. He felt that he could not, under such circumstances, either conscientiously or successfully support the measure, and on the 7th of July he resigned, and, on an interview with Earl Grey, refused to withdraw his resignation. Even if he had been anxious to do so, the Premier knew that without Althorpe he could not carry on his Government, and on the 9th of July he announced to the House of Lords that he was no longer minister. It was an unhappy close of a noble public life, that the Premier who had carried the great Reform Act should retire because he could not induce his colleagues to pass a sufficiently stringent Coercion Bill. This event raised a cloud between the once popular hero and some of his admirers ; but it was a cloud which the sun of national gratitude dispersed, and men remembered more vividly the work which he had done than the mistake which led to his retirement.

This resignation was supposed at the time to increase the power of the Radicals, to give an "addition to the influence of the *movement* party, as it was called—that is, of the party who clamoured for more Radical and destructive innovations." *

* "Annual Register," 1834, p. 124.

The appointment of Melbourne as the successor of Grey did not support this theory. Whatever else Melbourne might be, he could never be called a Radical. He had no enthusiasm for political principles, and was a Liberal rather by intellectual conviction than instinctive feeling. Originally a Whig, he had joined Canning's Ministry, and remained in office not only under Goderich, but under Wellington. However willing, therefore, he might be to give expression to Liberal feeling, he was not a man likely to lead any revolt on the part of the most advanced officialism against the interests or the prejudices of the governing classes. It did not annoy him to make concessions in either direction, and, having been appointed First Lord on the 16th of July, he appeared as Premier in the House of Lords on the 17th, and announced the changes in the Coercion Bill which Grey had refused to adopt.

This was the last event which affected the position of the Ministry. It had been weakened by the secession first of Stanley and his friends, and afterwards of Grey. Its means of carrying any disputed measure depended on the extent to which it could appeal to popular support, and this was an instrument very unacceptable to the old Whigs. The directions in which advance would sooner or later have to be made, if this help was to be secured, were manifested by debates during the session. As early as the 6th of March, before any of the Cabinet disasters had occurred, Hume had moved—"That this House do resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to consider of the corn laws, and of substituting, instead of the present graduated scale of duties, a fixed and moderate duty on the import at all times of foreign corn into the United Kingdom, and for granting a fixed and equivalent bounty on the export of corn from the United Kingdom, with the ultimate view of establishing a free trade in corn." There were two nights' debate, Althorpe and Graham opposing, and Poulett Thompson, a member of the Ministry, and Lord Howick supporting it, and in the end the resolution was rejected by 312 to 155. The subject was

further debated on the 19th, 20th, and 21st of March, on the presentation of a petition from Liverpool, the occasion being remarkable from the statement of Peel, that he objected to free trade in corn as unjust to the landed interest in view of the protection given to manufacturers, and he gave illustrations of protective duties. This is important in view of the action subsequently taken by Peel in tariff reform, and in that way his removal of the main ground on which he opposed free trade in corn.

On different branches of Parliamentary reform and other popular subjects, debates were held and divisions taken. On the 15th of May Tennyson moved for leave to bring in a bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments, for which he obtained 185 votes; and on the 19th of June De Lacy Evans moved the abolition of the rating clauses of the Reform Bill, and the votes were 37 for, and 134 against. Bulwer, who was as yet enrolled amongst the Radicals, moved, on the 22nd of May, "that it is expedient to repeal the stamp duty on newspapers at the earliest possible period." The motion was seconded by Roebuck, but was lost, the numbers being—for, 58; against, 90.

Whilst these popular discussions and ministerial changes had been going on, the chief—or, it may be said, the only—practical piece of legislation effected was the amendment of the poor laws. The new law was a measure which, although it excited intense popular feeling, did not divide the Parliamentary Liberals, the Ministry deriving great assistance from Grote and other Radicals. It was not until the middle of August that this difficult subject was disposed of, and on the 15th of that month Parliament was prorogued.

The prorogation was followed by some events outside, which, as they affected the solidarity of the ministerial party, ought to be briefly referred to. The House of Lords afforded very few materials of Radicalism; but there was one member, Lord Durham, who, by conviction and courage and consistency, was worthy of being, as he really was, one of the

most trusted leaders of the popular party. There was a good deal of opposition in feeling and in policy between Durham and Brougham, and it was one of the causes of Radical suspicion and discontent that the former had been forced or manœuvred out of the Cabinet. When Parliament broke up, Lord Grey went into Scotland, and was welcomed on his way at many places by public demonstrations, gratitude for his lifelong services having already overcome the dissatisfaction with the immediate cause of his retirement. He was accompanied by his son-in-law Durham. The Lord Chancellor, Brougham, had also started on a round of exhibitions of himself as a great popular statesman, which were regarded with astonishment at the time, and are now the subject of little more than ridicule. In some places he posed as the adviser of progress and reform, at others he announced himself as the friend of moderation.

At Edinburgh, on the 15th of September, the two parties met, Brougham attending and speaking at a great meeting held in honour of Grey. His speech on this occasion took the moderation tack, and he spoke with vehemence and at great length against reformers, who, in a fretful impatience, endangered all progress by rash attempts to go too fast. It was impossible for Durham to refrain from answering a challenge so evidently directed to him, and in reply he said, "My noble and learned friend, Lord Brougham, has been pleased to give some advice which I have no doubt he deems very sound to some classes of persons—I know none such—who evince too strong a desire to get rid of ancient abuses, and fretful impatience in awaiting the remedies of them. Now, I frankly confess I am one of those persons who see with regret every hour which passes over the existence of recognized and unreformed abuses." The cheers which greeted this sentiment, from ministers who were present as well as from the general audience, formed a rebuke to the Lord Chancellor, which his temper and his self-importance rendered him unable to bear. A few days after he made a speech at Salisbury, in which he defied Durham to meet him in the House of Lords—a curious

arena in which to settle a dispute between Liberals.* The challenge was accepted, but the combat never took place ; it was prevented in a quite unexpected manner.

The King did not love his ministers, and he hated their politics. Scenes like that at Edinburgh showed him not only that there were dissensions and consequently weakness in the Cabinet, but that the Government were, to a great extent, cut off from that popular sympathy which had forced them into power. He was therefore encouraged to take advantage of any opportunity for escaping from their control. An occasion, not very promising, but still sufficient to serve a foregone purpose, soon presented itself. On the 10th of November Lord Spencer died, and Lord Althorpe, going into the Upper House, had to relinquish the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Such a change of offices as then became necessary was not regarded by the Premier as of very great importance, and on the 14th of November he waited on the King, to submit to him the proposed arrangements, which included the nomination of Lord John Russell as leader of the House of Commons. Melbourne had expected the interview to be merely formal, and the approval of his proposals to be a matter of course ; but, to his surprise and dismay, he was informed that his Majesty would not impose upon him the task of completing the official arrangements, but would apply to the Duke of Wellington to form a new Administration.

On the following day Wellington saw the King, and advised him to entrust the formation of a Ministry to Sir Robert Peel, and the advice was accepted. Peel was at the time in Italy, and Wellington undertook to make provisional arrangements and to carry on the routine of Government during the absence of the new Premier. He took for the time the place of First Lord of the Treasury, and Lyndhurst was appointed Lord Chancellor. On the 9th of December Peel arrived in London, and accepted the task which had been offered to him. He applied, in the first place, to Graham and Stanley, but they both declined ; so he completed his Ministry

* Martineau's "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. ii. p. 159.

from more purely Tory sources, and, having done so, advised the King to dissolve Parliament, and on the 30th of December the notice of dissolution was published. So ended the first Reformed Parliament, after an existence of only two years.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE DISSOLUTION OF THE FIRST REFORMED PARLIAMENT TO THE DEATH OF WILLIAM IV. (1834-1837).

THE dismissal of the Ministry and the dissolution of Parliament were events which struck the Whigs with as much surprise as indignation. The surprise was shared by the country ; it remained to be seen if the anger was anything like as general. Only two years ago the Tories had believed that the Reform Act had entirely changed the course of English political life ; that at one step the line between order and anarchy had been passed ; that the old influences of aristocracy, church, wealth, and social position, had been destroyed, and that democracy had been made supreme. The Whigs believed that whilst the fears of their opponents were exaggerated, they had so manipulated the constituencies that a long and unbroken tenure of power had been secured. The elections in 1832 seemed to give colour to both these views. The majority of Liberals in the Commons was so overwhelming that practically the House was of one mind ; and amongst the Liberals the Radicals were so numerous, so earnest, and so strong in the possession of public confidence that they seemed destined to give the law to the Government. The Peers professed to be fighting rather to preserve their existence than to maintain their old political predominance, and the Crown had no choice but to accept a Ministry so unmistakably nominated by the national will.

Now only two years had passed, and the King ventured to dismiss the ministers who had been so popular, and to dissolve

the Parliament which had been created by so remarkable an exercise of public enthusiasm. It was a bold action, and, though not absolutely unconstitutional, decidedly irregular, for the Sovereign to dismiss a cabinet which had the confidence of a large majority of the House of Commons, and appoint a new one which was as certainly in a minority; and that not in consequence of any vote even in the Lords, but merely on the occasion of a personal change which did not affect either the policy or the stability of the Ministry. The Whigs hoped that this proceeding, followed by a dissolution of the reformed Parliament, would lead to such a demonstration of public feeling as would send them back to office with an undiminished, if not with an increased, majority. In this they were deceived; either the people had to a great extent withdrawn their confidence, or the electorate as reorganized still failed to fairly represent the people. Both these causes were in operation. The gains that were made on the Liberal side were chiefly those of the Radicals, whilst the counties and many of the smaller boroughs, answering to the territorial pressure which had been made possible by the Act, returned a large Tory contingent from what had been thought Whig strongholds.

Whilst, then, an increase took place in the Radical numbers, there was a decrease in the general Liberal ranks. The "Annual Register" calculated that the election "brought an addition of more than a hundred members to the Conservatives, exclusive of those Whig reformers, such as the party of Lord Stanley, who refused to identify themselves with the Whig opposition in its present condition and conduct." * The Whig loss in the elections did but represent their loss of character and regard in the mind of the nation. It has been said, that it was only enthusiasm and earnestness about some great cause which could break down the force which political and social influences kept constantly arrayed against the extension of popular privileges. The late ministers had done nothing and offered nothing to arouse that enthusiasm. The people had hoped to have their food untaxed, ministers

* "Annual Register," 1835, p. 13.

had voted against the repeal of the corn laws; they had hoped for relief from taxation, ministers had voted with the Tories against the reduction of the pension list, and seemed to care nothing for financial reform; they had hoped for a settlement of the Irish Church difficulty, ministers had abandoned the only clause in the bill which dealt with the principle at stake; they hoped to conciliate the Irish people and effect a real union, ministers had proposed the most stringent Coercion Bill which had ever been known; they had hoped that religious equality would have been vindicated by the reform of the marriage laws, ministers offered a measure which the dissenters rejected with contempt. On all these questions there seemed as much to be expected from the Conservatives as from the Whigs. Before the Reform Act was passed, a Tory Parliament had amended the corn laws and had carried Catholic emancipation, and the Whigs had done nothing better or bolder. So thousands of electors quietly accepted the direction of landlords and patrons, and voted for Conservatives.

Where there was any enthusiasm the constituencies looked to the Radicals as opposed to the Whigs, and again the old ministers were the losers. It might have been thought—and at the time it was thought—that these conditions would make the Whigs more than ever dependent upon the Radicals, and would result in the adoption of a stronger and more decided policy. “It became one of the results of the change,” said the “Annual Register,” “that a greater degree of influence was acquired by the Radical party than it had yet been able to manifest.”* This was the opinion of some of the most thoughtful members of that party, and there was great disappointment when the expectations were not realized. John Stuart Mill has expressed in his “Autobiography” the feeling of disappointment which was caused by the failure of the Radicals to make themselves felt in legislation in the years following the Reform Act.† The failure was still more

* “Annual Register,” 1835, p. 3.

† “Autobiography,” pp. 194, *et seq.*

marked in the second Parliament, but its causes were more easily to be explained.

For one thing, it is clear that a policy can only be fully developed and efficiently carried out by those who thoroughly believe in it. Until the Radicals are prepared to undertake the government of the country, they cannot expect that their principles will inspire the thoughts and acts of the Government; until they can insist upon obtaining not merely an occasional seat, but a recognized position of equality in the Cabinet, they cannot expect that in any ministerial programme their policy will obtain a fitting recognition. The Radicals in 1835 were neither sufficiently organized to insist upon such a position, nor provided with leaders who could have filled it. The Whigs, on their side, were as much repelled from, as attracted to, Radicalism by the result of the elections. It was true that their only chance of resuming office lay in securing the votes of the reformers; but, on the other hand, there was proved to be amongst the constituencies a solid force of Conservatism which made it hopeless to attempt to carry against the House of Lords any policy of reform which was not thorough enough to awaken the popular spirit, and to such extreme views the Whigs were as much opposed as the Conservatives. If it came to a real trial of principle, there was much more likely to be a coalition between moderate Conservatives and Whigs than between Whigs and Radicals. At the worst, when they were once in office the old ministers could count, as they had done in the last Parliament, upon Conservative votes to resist the too Liberal section of their own followers. For the next thirty years this was the position which the Whigs held. They had to be Liberal enough to outbid the Conservatives, but not so Liberal as to endanger the privileges and power of the class to which they as much belonged as did their avowed opponents.

The first thing to do, however, when the new Parliament met in 1835, was to turn out the Conservative Ministry. To effect this object, it was not enough that the English and Scotch Radicals should be conciliated, for the Government

following outnumbered the whole of the British Liberals. The Irish party had also to be secured, and the character and temper of O'Connell made this a more difficult matter. It was so evidently the policy of all sections to unite for the defeat of the ministers that the alliance to that extent was accomplished. The price, in promises, which was paid to the Irish members was shown when the time for decisive action came. This did not arrive quite so early as was expected, although its coming was foreshadowed on the first night of the session. The House of Commons met on the 19th of February; the first business was to elect a Speaker, and this was made the occasion of a trial of strength. Now that the Liberals were in opposition, their leaders could not take the course they did in the last Parliament, and assent to the election of a Tory Speaker; and so Mr. Abercromby was proposed by them, ministers on their part moving for the reappointment of Sir Manners Sutton. The contest was closer than was expected on either side, the numbers being—for Abercromby, 316; for Sutton, 306. This was enough to prove that the Government could not permanently hold office; but Peel's object was not so much to retain power as to show that his party had a practical working policy and administrative power for its realization. In this he succeeded, for the opposition were not strong enough to venture upon a direct vote of want of confidence.

Preliminary business having been got through, the session was formally opened by the King in person on the 24th of February. To the address in reply to the speech the opposition moved a very mild amendment, the principal point in which was the expression of an opinion that the late dissolution was unnecessary, and that it had interfered with the progress of reforms. This was not a very inspiring war-cry, and it did not rally the party to any violent effort, the amendment, after three nights' debate, being carried by a majority of seven only, the numbers being 309 for, and 302 against. This was discouraging to the opposition, and gave the Government time to develop their policy. Peel took

advantage of the opportunity with a skill which surprised his opponents, and a courage which impressed all parties. He announced that he was prepared to consider the report of the municipal commission, and to deal with its recommendations in a liberal spirit. He introduced a Marriage Bill which, unlike that of the former Ministry, won, as far as its main lines went, the acceptance of the dissenters. He proposed a scheme for the commutation of tithes which manifested both adaptive and administrative skill. Above all, in his speech against the repeal of the malt tax, he had shown such an ability in understanding the real bearing of financial questions, and such a readiness to deal with them, as were scarcely claimed, and were certainly not possessed, by any other living statesman. He could not hope, by all his exertions, to maintain power in a Parliament where the majority was determined to defeat him, but what he did was to teach the country that it was not dependent upon one set of men for capacity to carry on the Government, and that if the people were dissatisfied with the Whigs, they need not hesitate to say so from the fear of a reactionary policy on the part of the Conservatives.

The opposition taunted the ministers for retaining office after repeated defeats in the House of Commons ; Peel replied that unless a vote of want of confidence were carried, he would not resign until he had submitted his proposals to Parliament. At last the contest reached a climax. Ministers introduced resolutions which proposed to deal with the subject of tithes in Ireland. The opposition determined to raise the old appropriation question in a form which, if carried, the Government could not accept. Accordingly, after some preliminary notices and change of date, the 30th of March was fixed upon as the day for the final attack. The selection of the subject was evidently decided upon from strategical reasons. It would secure the heartiest support from the Radicals, and especially from the Irish section of the party, on whose action the result depended. Otherwise the choice was not a fortunate one, and it was afterwards the cause of bringing such dishonour upon the Whig leaders as scarcely any other body of English poli-

ticians has suffered. On a previous occasion, when in office, they had submitted clauses carrying out the principle, and had withdrawn them; and they had themselves assisted to out-vote Ward when he proposed a resolution of a similar character. Afterwards they allowed the very question on which they destroyed Peel's Government to be carried against them; but, unlike Peel, they submitted to the defeat, and consented to live on as a Ministry under the disgrace.

On the 30th of March Russell moved his famous resolution, "That this House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House in order to consider the present state of the Church establishment in Ireland, with the view of applying any surplus of revenues not required for the spiritual care of its members to the general education of all classes of the people, without distinction of religious persuasion." The debate occupied three nights, and the division was taken on the 3rd of April, when the numbers were—for the resolution, 322; against, 289, giving the opposition a majority of thirty-three. This majority was created by the Scotch and Irish vote, the English leaving the motion in a minority of nine.* It was early on Friday morning that this division was obtained, and the minister proposed that the committee should not be taken until the following Monday. The opposition would not allow even that delay, and on the same evening, therefore, the debate was begun, and was adjourned to the 6th, when the numbers voting were—in favour of the resolution, 262; against it, 237, leaving a majority of twenty-five. On this Lord John moved another resolution declaring—"That it is the opinion of this House that no measure upon the subject of tithes in Ireland can lead to satisfactory and final adjustment, which does not embody the principle contained in the foregoing resolution." This second resolution was carried by a majority of twenty-seven; the declaration which condemned beforehand any bill which it was possible for them to introduce ministers considered fatal, and on the 8th of April Peel announced that he and his colleagues had resigned.

* "Annual Register," 1835, p. 221.

The Liberals, then, were again called to office, and there was some speculation as to the conditions and principles under which the distribution of places would be made. The question on which the contest had been based was distinctly Radical. It had in the previous session split up the Whig Ministry, and led to the secession of Ripon, Stanley, and Graham, and there were Whigs yet left in the party to whom it was far from acceptable. But it was necessary that some decided step should be taken—in the first place, to prove that the opposition leaders were really more Liberal than the Ministry ; and in the second place, to secure the Irish and the extreme Radical support. There was good ground for claiming that those whose ideas and whose votes had assisted in the victory should share in the spoils, or rather should be allowed to assist in carrying into effect the policy to which they were most sincerely devoted. The Radicals, besides being the strongest in popular estimation, were numerically nearly one-half of the entire Liberal party. We have seen that estimates as to the exact numbers of the different sections varied somewhat widely, but it is fair to reckon that only Radicals would vote for the ballot,* and when, in this first session of the new Parliament, on the 2nd of June, Grote brought forward his resolution for that object, he obtained 144 votes, whilst the total number of votes in the final division which drove out the Conservative Government was 322.

It is necessary once more to notice that the Radicals were not divided by any sharp line of demarcation from the other Liberals. They were the most advanced and the most earnest section of the party, the result of the growth of opinion in the country and in Parliament, and not a suddenly created caste with views and feelings separated from those of the rest of the nation. They had more faith in the people, and a stronger desire to extend the popular power, than the Whigs showed in their actions, but not more than they professed when they

* How strongly the Whigs looked upon the ballot as a distinctively Radical question, may be gathered from the way in which their clerical champion Sidney Smith speaks of secret voting and its advocates.—See article "The Ballot," in his collected works, single volume edition, pp. 769, *et seq.*

were bidding for office. No doubt, out of the 150, more or less, of recognized Radicals there were many who, if any division had been actually made, would have voted for the Whigs ; but, on the other hand, all the Whigs were prepared to vote Radical when their leaders asked them. The gradation of parties from the High Tories to the Radicals was remarkable, and was well understood at the time, as was the consequent difficulty of forming a compact majority on either side of the House. T. S. Duncombe, himself a very decided, and at that time a very active, Radical, made a calculation which illustrates this part of the subject very completely.* He divided the members of the House of Commons in 1836 first into the two great parties, giving 319 to the Conservatives, and 332 to their opponents. This was no doubt an actual and practical division, but he went on to subdivide both sections, with this result. On the ministerial or Liberal side, he said there were—

Whigs	...	...	...	...	...	..	152
Liberals	...	...	...	...	...	...	100
Radicals	...	...	...	...	...	...	80
							<hr/> 332

On the other side—

Ultra-Tories	...	...	...	...	...	...	100
Moderate Tories	...	...	...	...	...	...	139
Liberal-Conservatives	...	...	...	...	...	...	80
							<hr/> 319

This estimate was made with considerable shrewdness, and the hundred members whom he called Liberals would have heartily approved of an active policy on the part of the new Ministry. It would have been nothing but just, therefore, and it would have been extremely wise also, if the Liberal leaders, when they were called upon to form a Government, had chosen a fair number of colleagues from the popular party. By this means their own policy would have been kept more healthy ; they would have been in more direct communication with the men who represented not only the popular constituencies, but the popular ideas. They would consequently have retained

* “ Life of Duncombe,” vol. i. pp. 212, 213.

that hold on the national feeling which, by adopting a different course, they were destined speedily to lose. For the Government was formed upon the narrowest sectional basis, no new man representing the new ideas being admitted. The only persons connected in any way with Radicalism were Hobhouse and Poulett Thompson, of whom the former had been disowned by the Westminster constituency, and the latter was not sufficiently strong to vindicate his principles in a Cabinet where he stood alone. Thompson, indeed, did insist upon the right of voting for the repeal of the corn laws, but that at the time was regarded as a very cheap concession.

This difficulty of deciding how to deal with Radical claims was, perhaps, one of the causes of the delay which occurred in the formation of the Ministry. The King, in the first place, sent for Lord Grey; but he declined, and advised that Lord Melbourne should be called, and the advice was accepted. It was on the 8th of April that Peel had announced his resignation, and it was not until the 18th that Parliament was informed that the new Administration was formed, when Melbourne said that the difficulties which he had encountered in constructing his Ministry had not only been many and great, but some of them of a peculiarly severe and mortifying nature. This mortification did not end with the appointments, for on the re-election of those members of the House of Commons who had taken office a severe reverse was experienced. Russell was rejected by Devonshire, and Palmerston by Hampshire, both having to find other constituencies; and seats in Staffordshire and Inverness-shire, rendered vacant by the elevation of Littleton and Grant to the peerage, were both filled by Conservatives. There was nothing in the constitution of the Cabinet to excite any popular feeling, and without that the counties were sure to be lost.

The Government did not learn either of the lessons which these reverses should have taught them; they neither leaned towards the Radicals nor stiffened their own policy. On the contrary, as they were beaten in the counties by the Tories, they seemed inclined to become themselves more Conservative.

Both Houses had adjourned to the 12th of May, and when the Commons met, Russell, who had become leader of the House, said that if he had learned anything by the experience of the last three years, during which he had been a member of the Government, it was that they frequently fell into difficulties by undertaking too great a multiplicity of measures—an error which, if the Whigs had ever committed, they never from that time went anywhere near repeating. For the present session he announced, that whilst ministers would consider any question that had been brought before the House by the late Ministry, they would confine their own initiative to two questions—municipal reform and the regulation of Irish tithes. This last subject was forced upon them because they had forced it upon the House as the instrument for destroying the late Government; but it proved far more injurious to them than it had done to their rivals. Peel lost office, but the Whigs lost honour, by their method of dealing with the subject.

Municipal reform was first dealt with, and the Act which the Government passed forms one of the strongest claims which they possess to the respect and gratitude of the country. It was introduced by Russell on the 5th of June, was read a second time on the 15th, and went into committee on the 22nd of the same month. There were numerous divisions over clauses in committee, but no alterations were made, the Liberal union being too strong and too fresh from its victory over the late Ministry to give way on any point. On the 20th of July the bill was read a third time and passed. In the House of Lords its fate was very different. The great merit of the bill was that it did for local government, so far as regarded the large towns, what the Reform Bill did for national government: it destroyed the system of corrupt, close, and self-electing corporations, and substituted for it the great principle of popular representation. The principle was limited and restricted, but it was there, and its presence roused the opposition of the Peers. A good deal was said about vested rights and ancient institutions, but the real ground of offence was pretty plainly put by Lyndhurst, when,

on the 14th of August, he was supporting a proposal for the introduction of life-members into corporations. He said that town councils, constituted as they would be under the bill as it stood, could not safely be entrusted with the extensive powers which it conferred upon them. They were to be elected by the whole body of ratepayers, and all experience showed that they would act under the control of the persons by whom they were elected. This is the secret of the enmity of the Lords to all reform—a fear lest the people should obtain the full management of their own affairs. Of the injurious amendments introduced into the bill in the Upper House some were rejected, a few were accepted, and several were modified,* and ultimately, on the 9th of September, the measure became law.

The Ministry were less successful with the Irish tithe question. They carried through the Commons a bill which included the disputed appropriation clauses. The Peers passed the other part of the measure, but struck those clauses out. The Government had declared that they meant to stand or fall by the principle, but, being defeated, they decided to stand without it for a time, and eventually to desert it altogether. Having once accepted defeat, they became gradually feebler in disposition and weaker in popular support, and subjected themselves to the well-deserved rebuke of the men whom they had driven out of office on this very question. The absolute surrender was deferred for three years, but it was inevitable from the time when without resigning they accepted the destruction of the bill of 1835.

The Whigs had practically decided neither to strengthen the Ministry by any additions from the Radicals, nor to adopt any of the principles of that section of the party. The Radicals, on their side, not being able to carry any measure in opposition to the combination of Whigs and Conservatives, and not feeling justified in leaving the Government to the

* The consideration of the Peers' amendments took place on the 31st of August, when some very strong language was used about the House of Lords by Roebuck and O'Connell.

tender mercies of the opposition, were debarred from even that amount of influence which their numbers would have warranted. Throughout the remainder of this Parliament, therefore, they were restricted to efforts to increase the efficiency of the ministerial proposals, in which they were not very successful. In this session of 1835, however, they accomplished two objects, one of permanent and one of great temporary importance. On the 5th of March Roebuck, following up the line which he had taken in the former Parliament, moved for and obtained a committee on the subject of education, a step which led to the beginning, in a very moderate way, of what afterwards became the national system and remained so until after the passing of the next Reform Act.

During the session there was much discussion as to the character and object of the Orange Societies which were established in different parts of England, and which, in contravention of the Articles of War, had been introduced even into the army. It was Hume who obtained the information and originated the proceedings taken in Parliament. It seems now scarcely credible that a conspiracy of so serious a kind could have been carried on in times so recent; but it was established by the evidence accumulated by Hume, that the Duke of Cumberland, who was Grand Master of the order, and some of his associates, in their desire to stop the spread of reform, and to reverse some of the great work already done, went so far as to contemplate an alteration in the succession to the throne, and even the dethronement of the reigning sovereign. The conspiracy had been carried on for some time, but the public exposure destroyed it, and in the following year the Orange Societies were dissolved.* The spirit of which this conspiracy was the outcome was one of the forces against which Radicalism had to work, and which it required the outspokenness of popular representatives to defeat.

* The history of these extraordinary transactions is too long to be given here, but it is told with great force and fulness by Harriet Martineau, in her "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. ii. pp. 266, *et seq.*

In the course of this year death removed two men who had long been associated with outside agitation, but had neither of them made any mark in Parliament. Hunt died on the 15th of February, and Cobbett on the 18th of June. Cobbett's place could not be filled by another, for, in fact, his work was done. There was no longer an uninstructed public dependent upon the exertions of one man for the food of political and social discussion; the periodical press was being increasingly recognized as a means of political education, and efforts were being made to free it from the trammels by which its action was limited. The work of Hunt was of a much more ordinary character; he was what the genteel politicians have generally agreed to call a demagogue—that is, he spoke to the class whom those politicians neglected and despised, and spoke to them in very strong language about rights and privileges which might be discussed in philosophical disquisition, but could not without impropriety be mentioned to the people whose interests were directly affected. Many of the things he said were true, but he spoke to the wrong class, and in terms not sufficiently polite. As, however, so long as injustice remains, some one will be found to talk about it, Hunt's special place was taken by Feargus O'Connor and his Chartist colleagues, who came in their turn under the same reproach which reached those who sought to give irregular expression to the views of the bulk of the people to whom constitutional representation was denied. These deaths could not be said to cause any distinct loss to Parliamentary Radicalism, whilst the election of Mr. C. P. Villiers for Wolverhampton, which took place this year, was a great gain.

The session of 1836 was one of almost unmixed misfortune and dishonour for the Whig Government. Their determination to keep office on any terms, and their readiness to desert their Radical supporters, were recognized by the Tories, and the want of popular sympathy which such a policy involved was deliberately traded upon by the opposition in the House of Peers. The "Annual Register," then a vehemently

Tory publication, expressed this view without disguise. Speaking of the Irish Municipal Bill, it said that ministers, on introducing it, "could not be ignorant that in the House of Commons they would have to contend with a large minority, and in the House of Lords with a large majority, which, unless acted upon by some universal exterior excitement, would never consent that such a bill should pass. . . . But although the calls were loud, no spirit came. The people of Britain could not be roused to aid a system of exclusive popery, and Parliament was left to exercise its undisturbed reason on a great political question." *

Parliament met on the 14th of February, and in the King's speech was a clause relating to this subject of Irish municipalities, expressing a hope that it might be settled upon the same principles as those of the Acts already passed for England and Scotland. Exception to this was at once taken by the Conservatives, and an amendment to the address objecting to it was carried in the Lords and lost in the Commons. When the bill was introduced, the opposition to it was founded upon the fact, that if the municipal suffrage was extended, as the measure proposed, in the large boroughs to the £10 householders, and in the smaller towns to the £5 householders, the majority of electors would be Roman Catholics; and because the Irish people did not hold the same religious opinions as their English fellow-subjects, they were to be denied all the rights and privileges of self-government. The bill was read a second time in the House of Commons on the 29th of February, and passed on the 28th of March by a majority of sixty-one. In the House of Lords it was read a second time on the 18th of April, and was then entirely altered in committee—all the clauses conferring popular franchises being struck out, and a system of patronage and life-tenure of offices inserted. The bill as altered was on the 19th of May sent down to the Commons, where ministers proposed a compromise, accepting some alterations and rejecting others. The Peers, however, refused any arrangement

* "Annual Register," 1836, p. 32.

of the kind, and insisted upon all their amendments ; on which Lord John Russell moved that the amendments be taken into consideration that day three months, which was carried, and the bill thereby dropped.

A similar fate befel the ministerial attempt to deal with Irish tithes. On the 25th of April Lord Morpeth moved a resolution and explained the nature of the proposed bill, which was to include clauses providing for the appropriation of surplus church revenue to other than church purposes. The second reading was moved on the 1st of June, and, on a division on the 3rd, was carried, over an amendment moved by Lord Stanley, by 300 to 261, giving a majority of thirty-nine. No material alterations were made in committee, and on the 15th of July the bill passed. It was read a second time in the House of Lords on the 22nd of July, and went into committee on the 25th, when all the appropriation clauses were struck out, and in the altered shape it went back to the Commons. As agreement was impossible, the same course was taken on the 2nd of August as was adopted with the Municipal Bill, and the measure dropped. The Ministry were equally unfortunate in an attempt to amend the English Municipal Act, especially the part relating to the administration of charitable trusts. The peers objected to the elective principle being introduced, and the Commons would not consent to matters remaining as they were. The differences between the two Houses were strenuously debated, two free conferences being held between them ; but in the end the Peers refused to give way, and this bill also was abandoned.

That ministers should accept these defeats and remain in office, as though nothing particular had happened, was fatal to their character. It has been, unfortunately, a matter of necessity that Liberal Governments have had constantly to submit to the alterations, and often to the rejection, of their measures by a House in which there is a permanent Tory majority, which can be moved only by fear to assent to any Liberal legislation. But there have, in the case of every Government, been questions involving serious principles

which they were bound either to carry or to resign. There has never been a case in which this honourable obligation was more binding than it was on the Melbourne Administration, with regard both to the appropriation principle and to the introduction of representation into municipal government. They were both points on which there could be no compromise, and with regard to tithes, Sir Robert Peel had set the nobler example of resigning because the opposition had carried a vote, the effect of which, now that they were in office, they allowed to be destroyed. There could be no public confidence in politicians who acted in such a manner, and they were only retained in power because the real Liberals were afraid of the immediate intentions of the Conservatives.

If they could not defeat the opposition, ministers could with its aid, and with that of the Irish members, set at defiance the wishes of the English Radicals. A measure which they brought in to carry out the recommendations of Peel's ecclesiastical commission, was in effect a proposal to increase the influence and strengthen the position of the Anglican episcopacy. It was opposed by the Radicals, and on the third reading, on the 19th of July, Hume proposed, C. Buller seconded, and Duncombe supported, a motion for its rejection, all of them speaking strongly of the folly of the Government in passing Conservative measures. As O'Connell and his friends deserted their old associates, only forty-four votes were obtained for the amendment, that being a fair test of the number of the thorough-going English Radicals who would rather sacrifice the Whig Ministry than betray their principles.

For the rest the session was tame enough. A bill to amend the marriage laws for the relief of dissenters was passed without opposition, Peel having, when in office, proposed a measure pretty much on the same lines. The commutation of tithes in England, being equally agreeable to the Conservatives was also passed. The stamp duty on newspapers, instead of being repealed, was reduced, a half-and-half way of proceeding which satisfied no one ; what was retained

being useless for revenue purposes, but effectual for the limitation of the influence of the press. The Radicals, as we have seen, were powerless. They moved resolutions—such as that introduced on the 13th of April for the abolition of flogging in the army, which was lost by 215 votes to 95—which were rather protests on behalf of principles than efforts expected to have practical results. In point of fact, the people outside, and the popular members inside, Parliament were convinced by the action of the privileged governing classes of both parties that little was to be hoped for until some further reform of Parliament was obtained, and it was now that the seed was sown which grew into the Chartist agitation.

At the opening of the session of 1837 it was the general opinion that the Whig Government had reached a stage of weakness and degradation which seemed to render their continuance in office impossible. Harriet Martineau says of them, "The history of our Whig Administrations is almost always made up of obstruction on the part of their adversaries, and powerless on their own; but never were the Whig rulers reduced to more desperate straits than in the spring of 1837. . . . In the House of Lords the Tories cried out that the country was without a Government; and the Radical members in the other House repeated the cry." * Spencer Walpole says, "Hopelessly discredited, the ministers passed through the autumn of 1836; hopelessly discredited they met Parliament in the spring of 1837." † Nor was this a mere unexpressed feeling of which the Government might, have been unconscious. They had both foes and friends who spoke out the truth plainly. At the end of the previous session on the 18th of August, 1836, Lyndhurst had gloried over their position. "Was there ever," he said, "in the history of this country a body of men who would have condescended so low as to attempt to carry on the government under such circumstances? In this House they are utterly powerless—they can effect nothing. . . . Yet, thus disgraced and trampled

* "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," vol. ii. p. 339.

† "History of England from 1815," vol. iii. p. 375.

on, they still condescend to hold the reins of government. Proud men, eminent statesmen, distinguished and high-minded rulers!"

When the new session opened, the Radicals were equally plainspoken. The Houses met on the 31st of January, and in the debate on the address Roebuck attacked the ministers and their policy. They had deserted, he said, the principles to which they owed their position, and he thought the Radicals should openly separate from such pretended friends. There was no actual breach, however, but there was no reconciliation. Ministers clung to office, whilst every proposition to which they attached importance was rejected; and they would not strengthen themselves by closer alliance with the Radicals, although, in order to defeat the resolutions of the popular party, they were uniformly indebted to the votes of the Tories who despised them.

It is difficult to understand the obstinacy with which the Whigs at this period refused to make any concession, either in the way of personal promotion or of acceptance of principles, to the section of Liberals which was both most numerous in Parliament and most popular in the country. That section contained men of undoubted ability, of irreproachable character, and of good position, and who were neither extreme in their demands nor violent in their methods. The exclusive class—and almost family—feeling which limited the area of selection, ought not to have been maintained under such hopeless conditions; and the theory of the finality of the late Reform Act could not be reasonably sustained, when ministers were unable to carry measures which they believed to be essential to the good government of the country, and on the success of which they had staked their official existence. There was not wanting a ready means by which the union could be effected. In Lord Durham there was a man who was connected with the best Whig circles, whilst he possessed the full confidence of the Radicals throughout the country. His acceptance of office would have been an assurance that reform principles were to be a reality, essential

to the continued existence of the Government, and that, perhaps, was one reason why his alliance was not sought. He was broken in health and spirits, but he was well enough, and vigorous enough, for ministers to use him for help in the most serious and vital business in which the country was concerned—in the settlement of the Canadian trouble—and they used and then deserted him.

The history of the session is the record of a series of these two kinds of events : defeat of Government measures by the Tory peers, and rejection of Radical proposals by ministers leading Tory majorities in the Commons. There were two Irish questions before the country. On one of them, the rearrangement of tithes, the Government had pledged itself in former years to stand or fall by, but their measures fell and they still tried to stand. On the other question, the establishment of representative municipal institutions, they were just going through the same process. In 1836 they had brought in a bill which the Lords so mutilated that it was dropped. This year the subject formed again one of the principal items in the King's speech, and the bill was introduced on the 20th of February and read a third time, and passed on the 11th of April by a majority of 302 to 247. It was read a second time in the House of Lords, but on the 5th of May Wellington proposed and carried a motion to postpone the committee to the 9th of June. This was resented by the Radicals in the other House, and on the same night Hume proposed to postpone the supplies to the 9th of June also, but ministers objected, and the motion was withdrawn. When the 9th of June came, Lyndhurst proposed another postponement, which was carried, and nothing more was done before the death of the King put an end to the session.

The only other important Government measure, that which proposed to deal with the vexed question of church rates in England, met with a fate just as disastrous. The scheme, which was introduced on the 3rd of March by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed to take possession of the church lands which formed the source of the incomes of bishops,

deans, and chapters, and by better management to increase the proceeds, applying the surplus to the purposes for which church rates were used. The plan commended itself neither to the church party nor to the dissenters ; and on the 22nd of May, on the second reading, it was carried by a majority of five only, the numbers being 287 to 282 ; and, this being equivalent to a defeat, the business went no further. This is a barren record of a ministerial session, but it was all that was attempted ; and if the Parliament had been prolonged, it is much more probable that the Government would have been turned out than that they would have accomplished any practical work.

The Radicals, on their part, were unusually active. If they had known, at the beginning of the year, that the death of the King would lead not only to the calling of a fresh Parliament, but to the opening of a new era in political life, and if with this knowledge they had tried to formulate a programme for the adoption of their party in the country, they could scarcely have taken wider grounds than they did. The subjects on which they gave notices, and on most of which discussions took place, were directed to both branches of politics ; to those which dealt with beneficent legislation, and to those which, by increasing the power of the people, would render any such legislation possible. Under the first head, the most important, both in its character and in its influence on the immediate political history of the future, was the proposal to repeal the corn laws. This was a distinctly Radical motion, for the Whigs were as much opposed to it as the Tories ; Melbourne and Russell were as strong in its condemnation as Wellington and Peel. This year it was Clay who, on the 16th of March, submitted a resolution for the repeal, which was seconded by Villiers, who was soon afterwards, at a meeting of the Radical leaders held at Sir William Molesworth's, formally requested to take charge of the question in Parliament.* On this occasion the motion was lost by forty-five votes, the numbers being 89 for, and 134 against. On the no less important

* Memoir attached to "Free Trade Speeches of Villiers," vol. i. p. 16.

subject of education, Ewart gave notice of a motion for the appointment of a minister of education, and Roebuck of one for the establishment of a national system. Ewart also took one of the earliest steps in the agitation for land law reform, by moving, on the 4th of April, for the abolition of the law of primogeniture, for which he obtained only twenty-one votes.*

It was becoming more and more evident that no permanent progress was to be expected until the opinions of the majority of the people obtained constitutional expression through a reform of the representative system. No advance of any kind was possible without long and violent agitation ; and whatever the special question before the country might be, a demand for parliamentary reform inevitably formed a part, and a very important part, in the public discussions which it aroused. The Peers would not give way on any subject until they were convinced that the excitement caused by their obstruction was likely to threaten their hold on the legislature. Accordingly, the motions of this kind were numerous and far-reaching. Amongst the notices given were those of Grote for the Ballot ; by Molesworth for the abolition of property qualification of members, and for a committee on peerage reform ; by Hume for household suffrage ; by Duncombe for the repeal of the rate-paying clauses of the Reform Act, and for the abolition of proxy voting in the House of Lords ; by Tennyson d'Eyncourt for the repeal of the Septennial Act ; and by Lushington for the exclusion of the bishops from the House of Lords. All those of the above motions which were actually introduced were defeated by large majorities, but many of them secured a considerable number of votes. Thus for the ballot there were 155 ; for abolishing property qualification, 104 ; for the exclusion of the bishops, 92 ; for abolition of proxy voting, 81 ; for the second reading of the bill to repeal rate-paying clauses, 73 ; and for shorten-

* Whilst the new school of Radicals were thus active, they were deserted by one who had once occupied the most prominent place in the party. Burdett, who had been lukewarm, now openly left them, resigned his seat at Westminster, and stood again as a Tory. He was successful then, but retired at the general election, and took a county seat.

ing Parliaments, 87. In all cases these were purely Radical votes, the ministers opposing them all; and what is noteworthy is, that in most of the cases they were Tory members who supported the Government. Thus on the ballot division, which took place on the 7th of March, out of 267 votes against Grote's motion, 200 were given by Tories. The "Annual Register," speaking on these divisions generally, and referring especially to that on the proposal to shorten the duration of Parliaments, in which the numbers were ninety-one to eighty-seven, says, "It will be observed that on all these divisions on constitutional questions the ministers were altogether dependent upon the Tories for the stand they were enabled to make against their more Liberal allies. On the present occasion, the number of Whigs and reformers who voted with Lord John Russell did not exceed twenty-nine, including persons in office; the remainder of their majority being gathered altogether from the benches of opposition." *

To this depth of helpless dependence and of inefficiency had the Ministry fallen, and on the 9th of June, the day to which the Irish Municipal Bill stood adjourned in the Lords, and the tithes question in the Commons, Roebuck moved for a committee on the state of the nation. In his speech, the member for Bath was almost as bitter as Lyndhurst himself on the feebleness and shortcoming of the Government. What would have been the fate of the resolution if any considerable number of Tories had supported Roebuck cannot be told. It was, however, withdrawn, for by this time it was known that an event was imminent which would change altogether the immediate relations of parties, and the position of the Government towards the Crown and the nation. Early in the year William IV. had been weak and ailing; towards May he became much worse; in June he was so seriously ill that bulletins began to be issued; and on the 20th of that month he died.

* "Annual Register," 1837, p. 126.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF THE QUEEN TO THE CLOSE OF THE
MELBOURNE ADMINISTRATION (1837—1841).

THE death of the King relieved the Melbourne Ministry in two ways. It removed a sovereign who was unfriendly to them and their policy, replacing him by one who would at all events be impartial, if not absolutely favourable, and who would not obtrude personal opinions and prejudices into the sphere of regal duty. Then it gave them an opportunity of obtaining a dissolution of Parliament, without first trying if Peel could form an Administration, and this it was pretty certain William IV. would not have allowed. They had, too, a prospect of retaining the Government influence in certain constituencies, and of securing for themselves the consideration due to the actual advisers and ministers of the young Queen. These were very considerable advantages, especially in the low ebb of their fortunes in the existing Parliament.

Their relations with the late King had been to ministers a constant source of irritation and danger. William IV. had the same desire which his father and brother had manifested—to interfere directly in forming the policy of the country ; but his fitful and changing temper made his intervention more annoying than the settled purpose of a more determined man would have been. From his youth he had shown the same unsteady disposition, and when he entered the navy he was too wayward and erratic to be allowed to continue in any responsible command. His character had not been modified by any systematic training for the high position to which he

was called, for it did not seem probable for many years that he would succeed to the Crown. The consequence was, that when he did ascend the throne he had neither a definite policy to pursue, nor the habits of consecutive application either in thought or action. Such a character was peculiarly liable to receive impressions, but little capable of retaining them.

The changes in his policy thus occasioned could not be understood and appreciated by the people, who naturally attached moral blame to what was really intellectual weakness. When, in the early part of his reign, he seemed heartily in favour of Parliamentary reform, he was everywhere hailed as a patriot king. Later on, when under the influence of members of his family, he shrank from the consequences of his own actions, and endeavoured to check his ministers in the course of practical Liberalism which the Reform Act was thought to have rendered possible, the reaction of popular feeling was equally sudden and violent, since he was supposed to have deliberately deserted principles which, in fact, he never understood. To the Tory party, and especially to that section of it which felt most deeply on ecclesiastical questions, the later conduct of the monarch was most welcome, and it gave additional strength to their resistance to the Government measures. The antagonism to the ministerial policy developed at last into personal dislike and disrespect to the ministers themselves, and added to the other causes of weakness from which they were suffering.

During the present reign the relations between the Crown and the Cabinet have been different. No one who has read Sir Theodore Martin's "Life of the Prince Consort" and the "Memoirs of Baron Stockmar," will think that personal prerogative is, or is assumed to be, extinct, or that it does not sometimes render the duties of ministers most onerous and difficult. Some of them have been subjected to a pressure which they could not resist, nor even explain, and which was the more embarrassing because it was not sufficiently urgent to justify resignation. There are, however, two features in

which the exercise of the personal authority of the Crown by the Queen varies from the method adopted by her last three predecessors. It is more decidedly constitutional in form, being in all cases applied through the Cabinet itself, only in rare instances through individual ministers, and never through Parliament or rival politicians behind the backs of, or in direct opposition to, the responsible advisers. There has been nothing like the formation of a party of King's friends by George III., nor like the announcement that he would never accept a particular statesman as a minister, or listen to a proposal which his Cabinet and the majority of Parliament considered essential to the good government of the country; nothing like the appeal of George IV. to Eldon to help him in his desire to frustrate the policy of his ministers; nothing even like the statement made by William IV. to the bishops when they waited upon him, to object to the proposals of the Government with regard to the Irish Church.

In the second place, the influence of the Queen has been, so far as published statements show, for the most part directed to foreign affairs, and not to the course of domestic policy. It is not the less important on this account, but it is certainly more difficult to attack. There is a theory that the declaration of war, the conclusion of peace, and the making of treaties, are matters pertaining to the royal prerogative. By this it is not, of course, meant that the authority should be exercised without, or in opposition to, the advice of responsible ministers; but when any department of the public service is removed from the direct control of the representative chamber, it neither surprises nor shocks the public mind to learn that more or less influence is exercised, personally, by the monarch in whose name the whole business is transacted. What is wanted to be done is to place under the management of Parliament and subject to its authority, the conduct of those affairs which affect, more vitally even than domestic policy, the welfare, the honour, and the stability of the nation.

At the commencement of the reign, however, the Whigs

possessed, and made most unsparing use of, the confidence and favour of their young sovereign. The King's death put a stop to all business except the voting of the necessary supplies and formal routine measures, and on the 17th of July Parliament was dissolved. In the election contest which followed, the name of the Queen was used by the Whigs in a manner which would now be considered unjustifiable and improper, and which gave rise to remarks and insinuations from Conservative speakers and writers to which it was unfair that the sovereign should be subjected. The result was a slight increase in the Liberal majority, not greater, perhaps, than might have been accounted for by the use of Government influence, but sufficient to secure the continuance of the Ministry in office.

The comfort and convenience of the Cabinet, if not their actual strength in Parliament, were increased by a change which gradually took place in the policy of the Radical party. That party had lost little, if anything, in numbers by the elections. Some of the leaders met with disaster in the course of the campaign—Roebuck, Colonel Thompson, Hutt, and Ewart being defeated by Tories, and left without seats. Hume also was thrown out for Middlesex, but he found refuge in the borough of Kilkenny—an arrangement having been made there which illustrates the connection which then existed between O'Connell and some of the English Radicals, and the loyalty with which the Irish electors followed the instructions of the great agitator. O'Connell was nominated with Hume and Ewart—the plan being to elect O'Connell if he were defeated in Dublin; if he succeeded there, then to return Hume, if he were beaten in Middlesex; if both O'Connell and Hume were elected, then to take Ewart. The five polling days allowed time for working this scheme, and O'Connell getting in for Dublin and Hume losing Middlesex the latter was returned for Kilkenny. As a set-off for the defeat of Roebuck and the others, Leader won Westminster, from which Burdett retired, and for which Sir George Murray stood in the Tory interest. The Radical

character of the constituency was thus maintained, Leader and De Lacy Evans being returned.

The numbers of the Radicals were, as we have said, little, if at all, diminished; that is to say, there were as many members holding Radical opinions in the new House as there had been in the old. This was seen in some divisions in which votes might be given without any danger of injury to the Government. The party, however, no longer acted even with the approach to organization and unity which had once characterized it. There was a strong intention manifested to consider the Liberal party as the common centre of unity, and not to take any action which would forward the interests of the Tories. In accepting this position, the Radical leaders practically renounced the chance, and the hope, of forcing into the Government men who should be admitted not as individual Liberals, but as acknowledged representatives of the extreme section, with the power of affecting in a definite manner the general policy of the party. By this course, however self-denying and public-spirited it was thought to be at the time, the exclusive Whig feeling was strengthened, and the labour of obtaining official support to any thorough programme was enormously increased. From this time for many years the efforts of Radical members were directed to obtain outside pressure in favour of reforms which, if they had been more self-reliant and determined, they might have dictated from a place in the Cabinet itself.

This policy, if it was consciously and deliberately adopted at all, was not approved of by the whole party, and the diversity of feeling thus manifested formed a cause of weakness to the general body. There were two sections, the smaller one of which strove to direct public attention to, and arouse agitation on behalf of, those constitutional changes without which they were convinced that no substantial progress could be secured. It was natural that, being in this matter deserted by the bulk of the party in Parliament, they should have framed their proposals on the broadest

possible base, that they might at the same time make them consistent with the most democratic principles and obtain for them the widest and most earnest popular support. In this they did but fairly represent the opinions of the bulk of the working classes, who, after assisting to carry the Reform Act, found themselves left by its provisions without any direct voice in the selection of their rulers. The first important step taken by this party was the formulation of their demands in the shape of the People's Charter, the framing and publication of which took place in the following year (1838).

The other and more numerous section of the Radicals, whilst they did not deny the necessity of Parliamentary reform, devoted their energies to promoting administrative, commercial, and social reforms by means of pressure upon the existing legislature. They commenced their action in the new House also in the year 1838, by the meeting, before referred to, at Sir William Molesworth's, when Mr. Villiers was requested, and in fact formally deputed, to take charge of the movement for the repeal of the corn laws.* The kind of work thus undertaken was arduous to the last degree. It involved, as we have since seen, the cost, in labour and time and money, of originating and carrying on a separate national movement on behalf of every special piece of improvement which was to be undertaken; and it offered to the people, instead of the direct representation to which they were entitled, the opportunity of putting, by long-continued or violent agitation, an indirect pressure upon the governing classes in Parliament. Some compensation there was for this trouble and delay. If the Whig ministers themselves were never converted to any stalwart kind of policy, the average Liberalism of the party was increased by the propagandism of the Radicals, and the process which a more modern statesman has described as a permeation of the Whig mass by the Radical leaven went on. The influence was less than it should have been, because there were leading

* *Ante*, p. 279.

Radicals who from time to time took office on the condition not of insuring consideration for their own policy, but of being allowed to carry out that of their superiors.

One other gain has been obtained, of which the chief result is yet to be realized. The country has learned, at a heavy price to be sure, that the policy which the Radicals have advocated, which through a succession of agitations they have impressed upon the public mind, and for which by slow degrees they have obtained a partial acceptance by the legislature, is that which was wisest and best suited to its wants and requirements. There is scarcely an Act which has been passed to ameliorate the condition of the people, to elevate their moral, social, and political status, and to remove abuses, which has not been striven for by the Radicals, and called for by their followers, long before it was conceded by either section of the governing class. The nation must indeed be blind if it does not see that the men who were the first to appreciate the necessity of reform, to gauge the popular feeling, and to adjust our institutions to the growing necessities of modern times, were at least as much deserving of the name of statesmen as the ministers who resisted progress whilst resistance was possible, and maimed and mutilated the proposals which they were forced at last to entertain.

The Queen's first Parliament met on the 15th of November. The election of Speaker and the usual formalities occupied some days, and on the 20th business was commenced. The first division in the House of Commons was taken on an amendment moved to the address by Wakley, containing a declaration in favour of extension of the suffrage. The challenge was taken up by Russell, who declared himself opposed to an extension of the suffrage, the ballot, and triennial Parliaments. Leader and Charles Buller both protested in the name of the Radicals against this speech; Buller using language so strong that he afterwards modified and partially withdrew it. The division, when it was taken, formed the first proof that there were many men who, whilst approving of the principle of the amendment,

were not prepared to oppose the Ministry and divide the party upon such an issue. Only twenty members voted for the amendment, which was opposed by 509. The list of the minority is interesting as containing the names of the English Radicals who were determined to support the cause of reform at any cost, and as not containing those of the Irish Radicals.*

The remainder of the year was occupied mainly by the discussions attending the settlement of the civil list. The Radicals did what they could to keep the grants within reasonable limits, and especially to restrict the pension list, Harvey being the chief mover on their side. Their efforts on the whole could not be considered very successful. After the settlement had been made on most liberal terms, ministers arranged for the continuance to the Crown of the incomes of the duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, which made the total grants what can scarcely be described as otherwise than extravagant. The matter, however, led to no action which affected the position of parties. On the 23rd of December Parliament was adjourned to the 16th of January.

The shortness of the recess was caused by the anxiety which was felt with regard to the serious position of affairs in Canada. The two provinces of that great colony had been driven into disaffection, and one of them into rebellion, by the obstinate refusal of the home Government to concede the principle of representative government. In the year 1837 the crisis had been reached ; and on the 16th of March in that year Russell had met it by a series of resolutions which, after setting out the nature of the position, declared, amongst other things, that it was inexpedient to make the legislative council

* The names of the minority were—

Aglionby, H. A.	Duncombe, T. S.	Ward, H. G.
Attwood, T.	Fielding, J.	White, A.
Brabazon, Sir W.	Finch, J.	White, S.
Browne, R. D.	Grote, G.	Williams, W.
Bryan, G.	Hallyburton, Lord	
Butler, Hon. Col.	Hume, J.	Wakley, T.
Collins, W.	Leader, J. T.	Molesworth, Sir W. } <i>Tellers.</i>
Deninstoun, J.	Vigors, N. A.	

elective. The Radicals strongly opposed these resolutions, and Leader moved an amendment, which was supported by Roebuck, that the legislative council ought to be made elective. The amendment was lost by 318 to 56. Without hope of having their rights conceded, the colonists plunged into actual rebellion, which was, however, speedily suppressed. It was whilst the news of the rebellion was being received in England that the adjournment took place.

When Parliament met on the 16th of January, 1838, Russell announced that Lord Durham was to be sent out to Canada, and explained the bill by which his powers and duties were to be regulated. This measure relieved the colonists from many of the practical grievances under which they had suffered, but still refused their main request for a representative government. To this the Radicals again objected, but in vain, an amendment moved by Leader for delay being defeated by 188 to 28. Durham went out with full powers, and his use of them tended to the rapid pacification of the provinces. In one respect, however, he exceeded his technical authority. He banished some of the leaders of the late rebellion to Bermuda, a colony clearly beyond his jurisdiction. The error was not really material, because he had power to send the rebels out of Canada, but it was seized hold of by the opposition, and by Brougham, the bitter personal enemy of Durham. The ministers at first supported their governor ; but, cowed by the attacks made upon them, they on the 10th of August announced that they had disallowed the ordinance and accepted a bill of indemnity, which Brougham had introduced. This desertion of Durham, whilst it destroyed his prestige in Canada, broke his spirit, and he immediately resigned and returned home. His last service to his country was the preparation of a scheme for the future administration of Canada, which contained all the principles which have guided to such success the subsequent government of the Dominion. Radicalism has done no greater service to the kingdom than the vindication of the right of self-government in our colonies, and this was formulated in the report

which was to be the dying bequest of one of the best and noblest of the statesmen whom it has produced.

Next to the Canadian business, the most important and most interesting part of the proceedings of the session was the settlement of the Irish tithe question, and the humiliation inflicted by it upon the Ministry. On the 14th of May Russell introduced a string of ten resolutions as a basis on which to found his new Tithe Bill. The main interest which these resolutions excited centred round the question whether they did or did not involve the principle of appropriation, to which the Government had solemnly pledged themselves and the House in 1835. The present resolutions were framed with such ambiguity that it was impossible to say what answer they furnished, but in his speech Russell had been understood to say that the great principle was abandoned. It afterwards became clear that the concession had really been intended, but the ministers hoped to be allowed to carry a bill which gave up the principle without a direct confession of the fact. Such an escape from their difficulty, however, neither the Tories nor the Radicals were prepared to permit. Immediately after the resolutions were moved, Sir Thomas Acland rose, in pursuance of a notice which he had given, and proposed as an amendment that the resolutions of the 7th and 8th of April, 1835, should be rescinded. In the debate which followed Ward, the great champion of appropriation, said that he had thought he descried in the resolutions the germ of the appropriation principle, but he was assured by Lords J. Russell and Morpeth that the principle was abandoned. O'Connell, to the surprise of many of the Radicals, supported ministers in their proposition. Sir Robert Peel, to whom, as the writer of the "Annual Register" said, "the present occasion was one of no slight triumph,"* rose to support Acland's proposition. He pointed out how the resolutions had been the instrument by which his Government had been overthrown, because he would rather lose office than sacrifice his principles, and now the very men who had

* "Annual Register," 1838, p. 125.

risen on his defeat were willing to sacrifice their principles rather than lose office. There was no defence from this charge, and the Ministry never overcame the disgrace in which it involved them. The amendment was, however, defeated by a majority of nineteen, the numbers being 317 to 298 ; and the Government passed a bill which aimed merely at converting the composition into a rent charge, relinquishing a claim for the repayment of advances previously made to tithe-owners, and giving facilities for some further outlay for the extinction of arrears. During the debates on this bill Ward, on the 2nd of July, moved to insert the appropriation clause, and he dwelt upon the obligations under which the Government and the Parliament lay to observe the pledges made by the resolutions ; but the proposition was lost, only 46 voting for it, and 279 against.

The Government had hoped that the abandonment of the appropriation clause would have induced the Tories to assent to a reasonable Irish Municipal Bill ; but in this they were deceived, the Lords altering the conditions of the franchise in a manner which could not be accepted, and the measure was thereon dropped. It is thus that the Conservatives have time after time justified the complaint of Irishmen that they are treated by the imperial legislature in a different manner and on different principles to their fellow-countrymen in the other parts of the kingdom.

The Tories, however, were still prepared to support the ministers in their opposition to the policy proposed by the majority of the Liberals. At a banquet giving to him on the 12th of May, Sir Robert Peel said that the opposition under his guidance exercised much of the power of Government, and he gave, in proof of his assertion, cases in which the ministers had been dependant upon the opposition for the votes necessary to defeat proposals made by Liberals. Two of these instances had occurred during the existing session. The first was the 15th of February, when Grote moved his annual resolution for the ballot, and on a division there were—Ayes, 198 ; Noes, 315. Of this majority 254 were Tories, and only 61

ministerialists, so that if the Whigs had been left to themselves they would have been in a minority of 137. The second case was that of the vote on Mr. Villiers' motion for the repeal of the corn laws, made on the 15th of March, and defeated by 300 to 95. The majority was made up of 226 Tories and 74 Whigs, the ministers again being in a minority of their own party. Thus far had the Whigs advanced in "a policy which irritated a nation and destroyed a government." *

Under such conditions, the other Parliamentary proceedings of the session could not possess much historic interest ; but two events occurred during the year which exercised much influence, in the first place upon public opinion outside, and afterwards upon the action of the legislature itself. The People's Charter was published on the 8th of May, 1838. It had been drawn up by a committee appointed in the spring of 1837, consisting of six members of Parliament and six working men.† The charter was a carefully prepared bill containing provisions for registration and the conduct of elections, but its chief feature was the formulation of what were called the "six points,"—universal suffrage, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, annual Parliaments, abolition of property qualification of members, and payment of members. The other event alluded to was the formation of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association, which in the following year was merged in, or rather developed into, the famous Anti-Corn Law League.‡

It was unfortunate that anything like a division of the Radical party should have been caused by the agitation of these two subjects. Parliamentary reform and corn law repeal were both essentially Radical measures ; that is to say, they were both strongly and persistently opposed by the Whig leaders and ministers, and as strenuously desired by the Radicals. The repeal of the corn laws was one of the objects which

* Spencer Walpole, "History of England from 1815," vol. iii. p. 392.

† "The Life and Struggles of William Lovett," pp. 111, *et seq.* On p. 114 the names are given, the members of Parliament being—

J. A. Roebuck

D. O'Connell

Col. Thompson

J. T. Leader

C. Hindley

W. S. Crawford

‡ The "League" was formally established on the 29th of March, 1839.

the people hoped to attain by means of the Reform Act, and it was natural that they should look to a further reform of the Constitution to give them the power which the first had failed to secure. On the other hand, the misery caused by the existence of those laws was so great, their hindrance to national development and prosperity so flagrant, that it is not surprising that earnest philanthropists and practical politicians should decide to postpone every other subject to the determination to relieve the country from their oppression.

The tendency towards division in the party, caused by this difference of opinion as to the immediate policy which ought to be pursued, had a permanent effect on its fortunes in Parliament. It was increased by the clear and definite form into which the charter had put the demands of the people. There were comparatively few members who were prepared to accept the whole scheme, but there was no choice between doing so and losing the control of the agitation which had been commenced. It soon became the fashion to speak of the charter as something strange and violent, and as containing propositions too extreme to be considered by any but wild demagogues, the name always ready at hand to be applied to those who thoroughly trust the people and work with them. In reality the bill contained no such new doctrines ; every point in it had been specifically considered and adopted by a committee, of which Fox was chairman, and Burke, Sheridan, and other Whigs, were members.* Of the two main propositions, universal suffrage and vote by ballot, one has already been adopted, and a great stride has been made towards the other. Every advance in the direction of redistribution must be a nearer approach to the equalization of voting power ; and there are few Liberals who believe that seven years is not too long a period for the existence of Parliament. The property qualification for members has been abolished ; and, if all classes are to be really eligible for election, and full responsibility of members to their constituents effected, the payment of members must be adopted here, as

* See *ante*, p. 31.

it is in nearly every other country where constitutional government exists.

The phantom which was conjured up, therefore, like all such creations of diseased fancy, lost its terrors when it was calmly faced ; but whilst its effects were new it did what the enemies of progress most desired—it separated the friends of reform, and alienated the sympathies of the middle and lower classes and of their advocates in Parliament. The leadership which was thus declined by the bulk of the Parliamentary Radicals, was to a great extent assumed by the most violent section of the Chartists—men like Feargus O'Connor being able to frustrate the policy of wiser and more moderate advisers, such as Leader and Attwood inside Parliament, and Lovett and Vincent outside. The consequence was seen in the listlessness and half-heartedness which for years marked our Parliamentary history when Whig and Tory rule alternated, and culminated in the absolute political stagnation which characterized the last premiership of Palmerston. Throughout this long and dreary period, the Radicals did the work of originating and agitating for every proposal to ameliorate the social condition and increase the liberties of the people ; but they could not arouse the full force of popular enthusiasm, because for years they did not propose any definite scheme of reform which could take the place which the charter had held in the estimation of the working classes.

At the close of the session of 1838, the position of the party seemed almost hopeless. The Whig Ministry, suffering from the disgrace of the surrender on the Irish tithe question, was yet as much as ever determined not to seek for strength by any concession to popular demands. They were as decided as the Tories in resisting the repeal of the corn laws, and yet were dependent upon the advocates of that repeal for their existence. The Radicals had either to preserve a Government which would do little that they wanted, or allow it to be replaced by one more actively opposed to all reform. During the recess there had been agitation on both the great subjects which were engaging the attention of the country.

The Chartists had begun to alarm the timid, and the corn-law repealers had strengthened their organization and increased their efforts. The consequence was soon manifested when Parliament met. The session was opened on the 6th of February, 1839, by a speech which proved the continuance of the inability or the unwillingness of the Cabinet to meet the requirements of the country. Of domestic subjects action was advised upon three only—Irish municipal reform, a measure to increase the efficiency of the Established Church, and some provision for the better enforcement of the law and the more speedy and certain administration of justice. There was also a reference to efforts which had been made to excite the people to disobedience and resistance to the law, but no proposals were to be submitted on the subject. A more striking confession of feebleness has seldom been made in a royal speech, and it seemed almost to invite the defeat which the Cabinet were soon to suffer.

The Radicals lost little time in raising both the great questions which the Government had tried to evade. In the debate on the address the corn laws were discussed, Villiers on one side and Peel on the other being the principal speakers. In reply, Russell gave the first intimation that some change might be possible by declaring that he thought that the time had arrived when it should be considered whether the present system acted beneficially or not. No vote was taken on this subject, but Duncombe moved an amendment to add to the address the following words :—" To assure her Majesty that, as the amendment of the representative system, enacted in 1832, has disappointed her Majesty's people, and as that measure is not, and cannot be final, her Majesty's faithful Commons will take into early consideration the further reform of the Commons House of Parliament." This was seconded by Ward, and was met by Russell with another statement of his belief in the finality of the Reform Act. On a division, the amendment received eighty-six votes. At the beginning of the previous session only twenty votes had been given for a similar amendment ; but on the present occasion O'Connell

and some of his friends took part, whilst in 1838 they had abstained.*

Resolutions on the corn laws were at once submitted to both Houses, in the form of motions that evidence should be heard at the bar as to their operation and effect. Lord Brougham brought the subject before the Peers on the 18th of February. He was opposed by Melbourne, and the motion was negatived without a division. On the following day Villiers moved in the Commons that certain persons "be heard at the bar of the House, by their agents, witnesses, or counsel, in support of the allegations of the petition presented to the House on the 15th inst., complaining of the operation of the corn laws." Russell, whilst objecting to the mode of inquiry proposed, said he was willing to have the question examined by a select committee. This was a sign of wavering, and so far a gain to the repealers, who on a division found that they had increased their strength in the House, receiving on this occasion 172 votes to 361, whilst last year the numbers had been 95 to 300.

The subject was again raised in more direct form. On the 12th of March Villiers proposed a committee to consider the Act 9 George IV. c. 50 ; and on the 14th Earl Fitzwilliam, in the other House, moved a resolution that the Act had failed to secure that steadiness in the price of grain which is essential to the best interests of the country. The debates led to a manifestation of wide differences amongst the chief members of the Cabinet. In opposing Earl Fitzwilliam the Premier made the statement which has often been quoted, that "to leave the whole agricultural interest without protection, I declare before God that I think it the wildest and maddest scheme that has ever entered into the imagination to conceive." He went on to express his special dissent to a fixed duty. But on the 18th of March, in the adjourned debate on Villiers' motion, Russell, the leader of the House of Commons, said that he was in favour of a fixed duty, and

* Villiers, De Lacy Evans, Sir L. Bulwer, and other Radicals who were absent before, now voted.

he voted for going into committee. There were three parties to the dispute : the Radicals knew what they wanted—the total repeal of the laws ; the Tories equally knew their own mind—they resisted any alteration whatever ; but the ministers were divided and uncertain, the only thing clear being that they were open to the influence of pressure.

There was no prospect of much practical legislation, but in the middle of the session business was altogether suspended by a ministerial crisis, succeeded by a resumption of place by the Melbourne Government under conditions which subjected them not only to humiliation, but to contempt. The proceedings attending the abolition of slavery had led to great dissatisfaction on the part of the planters in Jamaica, and when the period first fixed for the continuance of the preliminary state of apprenticeship was shortened, the excitement increased and manifested itself in the House of Assembly of the colony by a refusal to obey or to recognize the law. The Whigs had in this case, as they had with regard to Canada, a short and simple method of settling the difficulty. They brought in a bill to suspend the constitution of the island for five years, and to provide in the interim for its government by the imperial authority. The bill was read a second time, and counsel was heard against it. The motion that the Speaker do now leave the chair, that the House might go into committee, was made on the 3rd of May, and was opposed by Peel. A debate followed, which was adjourned to the 6th, in the course of which different sides were taken by the Radicals. Buller strongly supported the bill on the ground that the constitution of Jamaica was oligarchical, and the sooner it was amended the better ; but both Hume and Grote spoke against the measure. There were a sufficient number of seceders to alarm the ministers, and Russell, in his reply, denounced their conduct. The alarm was justified, for on a division ten Radicals voted with Peel, and there were—for the bill, 294 ; against it, 289, leaving Government with a majority of only five, which they considered equal to a defeat.

On the following evening, therefore, ministers announced

their resignation. A week afterwards, on the 13th of May, Russell said that since he had last addressed the House Sir Robert Peel had tried to form an Administration and had failed, and that her Majesty had graciously permitted that gentleman to state the circumstances which had led to the failure. The explanation was contained in a description of what is known as the great bed-chamber question. The Whigs had surrounded the Queen by ladies connected with their own families. At first Peel had not noticed this fact, and did not propose any action with regard to it. He naturally supposed that at all events the relatives of the late Cabinet ministers would leave office when their husbands and brothers left. Beyond this line he never thought of going; but to his surprise he found that the wife of Lord Normanby and the sister of Lord Morpeth both intended to retain their positions in the royal household. To this Peel objected, and when the Queen applied for advice to Lord Melbourne, he recommended that the request of Peel should be refused. There is no doubt now that Melbourne's advice was constitutionally wrong; but it was accepted, and behind the petticoats of their ladies the Whigs sheltered themselves from the indifference of the Commons and the hostility of the Lords, and consented to continue in office.

It need not be said that place accepted on such terms brought no honour and very little power. What the terms were was clearly manifested by the fate of the second Jamaica bill, which the Government substituted for the one which had led to their resignation. On the 30th of May the new measure was brought in. The first clause empowered the governor in council, in case the Colonial Legislature should not, before the 1st of October—afterwards extended to the 15th—pass certain Acts, to make ordinances on the subject of contracts for labour, vagrancy, and the occupation of waste lands. This clause contained the very essence of the bill. It was carried in committee, on the 10th of June, by a majority of thirty-four; but on the 19th of June, on the motion for the passing of the bill, Goulburn moved its

rejection, and this time the Government majority was only ten. The Lords, of course, rejected this main feature of the measure, and ministers had to be content with the miserable remainder. But their resignation proved that they did not possess the power without which office ought to have been considered valueless. That the weakness arose not from the actual strength of the Tories, but from the disaffection of the Radicals, was shown when a vote was taken for the election of a new Speaker on the resignation of Abercromby. The election took place on the 27th of May. Shaw Lefevre was proposed by the Liberals, and Goulburn by the Tories, and the former was carried by a majority of eighteen, the numbers being 317 to 299.

What are called open questions—that is, questions on which members of a Government are not agreed, and each one is allowed to take his own course—are rarely heard of under a strong Administration, and never as applying to subjects of the first magnitude. The Melbourne Ministry, however, which had been destroyed by the secession of ten Radicals, could not afford to stand out on a proposal on which the whole Radical element of the party was agreed. So that when, on the 18th of June, Grote brought on his annual motion in favour of the ballot, Macaulay—who had recently returned from India—announced that this was an open question, and that he should vote for the motion. On a division the numbers were—for the ballot, 217 ; against, 335. The number voting for was greater by seventeen than that of the previous year, and supposing the full party vote to have been given on the election of Speaker, it left only one hundred Whigs who were not Liberal enough to accept the ballot.

Some other debates were raised on proposals for Parliamentary Reform. On the 21st of March Hume was defeated by eighty-five votes to fifty on a motion to go into Committee, to introduce a bill which was for the establishment of household suffrage ; and on the 4th of June Sir H. Fleetwood moved for leave to bring in a bill to assimilate the county to the borough franchise, for which he obtained eighty-one votes, but

was in a minority of 126. The question, however, which most severely tested the thoroughness of the Radicalism of members was the introduction of the charter. On the 14th of June Attwood had presented the national petition in favour of the six points, which had been signed by 1,200,000 persons. Going beyond the usual practice of the House, he was allowed, in consideration of the unusual character of the petition, to make a short speech on the presentation, and on the 12th of July he moved that the House should go into committee to consider the petition. At this time the question was compromised by the alarm which had been created in the minds of the upper and middle classes by the violent speeches and proceedings of some of the Chartists, a section of whom, under the instigation of Feargus O'Connor, calling themselves "Physical-force Chartists," had openly advocated an appeal to arms. Notwithstanding the general excitement, the debate on Attwood's motion was very tame, and the vote under the circumstances was very favourable, there being for the resolution, 46 ; against it, 235.*

Of the practical work of the session there is not much to be said. One important step was taken in the miserably slow process by which the State moved towards the performance of its duty to national education. The Committee of Council

* The following is a list of the members who at such a time had the courage to vote for the resolution :—

Aglionby, H. A.	Harvey, D. W.	Rundle, J.
Beamish, F. B.	Hector, C. J.	Salway, Col.
Blake, M. J.	Hindley, C.	Scholefield, J.
Bridgeman, H.	Hodges, T. L.	Somerville, Sir W. M.
Brotherton, J.	Jervis, S.	Turner, W.
Browne, R. D.	Johnson, Gen.	Vigors, N. A.
Collins, W.	Leader, J. T.	Villiers, Hon. C. P.
Currie, B.	Lushington, C.	Wakley, T.
Duke, Sir J.	Marsland, H.	Wallace, R.
Duncombe, T.	Martin, J.	Warburton, H.
Easthope, J.	Milton, Visct.	Williams, W.
Ellis, W.	Molesworth, Sir W.	Wood, Sir M.
Euston, Earl of	Muskett, S. A.	
Evans, G.	O'Connell, D.	Attwood, T. } <i>Tellers</i>
Fielden, J.	O'Connell, J.	Hume, J. }
Finch, F.	Ramsbottom, J.	
Grote, G.	Roche, E. B.	

on Education was now formed and entrusted with the control and distribution of the educational grant, which was raised to £30,000 for the year. Even this advance was not made without strenuous opposition by the Tories in both Houses. On the 14th of June, when Russell moved that the order of the day for going into committee of supply on the education vote be read, Stanley proposed as an amendment "that an address be presented to her Majesty, to rescind the order in council for constituting the proposed Board of Privy Council," and this was defeated by five votes only, the numbers being 280 to 275.

The contest was continued on the 24th of June, when Russell moved that the House resolve itself into committee of supply. The division was even closer than before, the numbers being—for, 275 ; against, 273, showing a majority of only two. Here, however, the struggle ended as far as the Commons were concerned, but it was taken up vigorously by the Peers. On the 5th of July the Archbishop of Canterbury moved a series of resolutions against the Government action, which, being carried, the Lords went in a body to her Majesty to offer their remonstrance against the scheme. Their lordships, however, took nothing by their motion. In her reply the Queen said, "I duly appreciate your zeal for the interests of religion and your care for the Established Church. . . . At the same time I cannot help expressing my regret that you should have thought it necessary to take such a step on the present occasion. . . . I trust that the sums placed at my disposal will be found to have been strictly applied to the objects for which they were granted, with due respect to the rights of conscience and with a faithful attention to the security of the Established Church." It was, of course, in the name of religion that this opposition to educational progress was raised, but by religion the bishops and their friends always meant the predominance of the Church. Because the expenditure was to be in the hands of the ministers of the State instead of those of the Church, every nerve had been strained to reject the plan.

Postal reform was the other practical achievement of the

session. This had been forced upon the Government by external agitation, which had found expression in Parliament through Wallace, the Radical member for Greenock. The writings and speeches of Rowland Hill, especially his work, "Post Office Reform : its Importance and Practicability," had proved that a complete change of system was not only necessary, but easy of attainment, and, unlike too many social reformers, he was destined not only to see the adoption of his principles, but to take an active part in their realization.

The Peers were fortunately unable to stop the educational movement proposed by Government, but where they could arrest Liberal action they did. The annual farce connected with Irish municipal reform was again performed. The House of Commons passed a bill, which was altered in the other Chamber in a manner which made it unacceptable. As ministers were not strong enough to enter upon a contest with the Lords, they did as they had done before—dropped the measure, and postponed the subject to another session. Parliament was prorogued on the 11th of August.

The discredit into which the Melbourne Government had fallen had been increased, in the popular mind, by the suffering consequent upon a long season of commercial and agricultural distress ; and in the opinion of thoughtful men, by the utter failure of their financial policy. The word *policy* can, indeed, hardly be applied to the feeble hand-to-mouth proposals which had from year to year been brought forward by Spring Rice, the Whig Chancellor of the Exchequer. His predictions had been rarely justified, his plans rarely successful, and the consequence had been a series of deficiencies which grew so far beyond his control, that in this his last year of office he did not even attempt to equalize the receipts and expenditure, but left a nominal deficit of over half a million, which was further increased by a million, owing to the decrease of revenue from the post-office during the first year of the new experiment. It was not surprising, therefore, that at the end of the session Rice should have been anxious to resign, nor that his colleagues should have been willing to allow him to

seek for peace in the less exciting sphere of the House of Lords. Baring became Chancellor of the Exchequer, but if he had the spirit, he had not the opportunity of reforming the system of finance to which his party had become accustomed.

Other alterations were at the same time made in the Cabinet. Russell, Home Secretary, and Normanby, Colonial Secretary, exchanged places, in the hope, it might be, that change in administrative details would compensate for the want of vigour in general policy. These arrangements would not be deserving of notice but for the fact that Lord Howick made them—the cause of his retirement from the Cabinet. His reason, as given in the following session, was that the changes were unfavourable to that section of the party who wished to avoid further constitutional reforms.* It is difficult now to understand the position thus taken up, but his lordship's readiness to assume the character of the candid friend, and to damage his party whilst remaining in it, perhaps gave special acuteness to his vision. It has since that time placed him in antagonism to the most earnest and useful Liberal leaders. His defection could just then do little good or harm to the Ministry, and his place was filled by Macaulay, who could at least give help as an orator to the decaying fortunes of the Government.

The Queen opened, in person, the session of 1840, and the principle subject of interest in the speech was the announcement of the intended marriage of her Majesty. The choice made by the sovereign gave universal satisfaction to people and Parliament, a satisfaction which steadily increased as the character of the Prince Consort became more known. There was, however, a difference of opinion as to the allowance which ought to be made to him, the views of economists being strengthened by the general distress which existed in the country. The Government proposed the sum of £50,000 a year, to which Hume, on the 27th of January, moved an amendment that it be £20,000. He was defeated by 305 to

* The explanation was given in his speech on the debate on Sir J. Buller's want of confidence and resolution, on the 28th of January, 1840.

38 ; but another amendment to make the annuity £30,000 proposed by Colonel Sibthorp, was supported by Peel and his party, and, taking also the Radical votes, it was carried by 262 votes to 158. Neither the sovereign nor her ministers were pleased with this decision, and Russell had shown his temper with regard to the amendment before the vote was taken, by a declaration that it showed a want of respect to the Queen. He did more harm than good by this ; he received rebukes from Peel and Graham, and had not authority to influence the vote in any appreciable degree. The wishes of the Cabinet had ceased to be an active power in politics.

The Tories, however, were too sanguine in their calculations as to the extent of the Liberal dissensions, or, at least, as to the willingness of the Radicals to leave the Government to the tender mercies of the opposition. They found this out when anxious to try their strength at once, Sir J. Y. Buller, as early as the 28th of January, moved " that her Majesty's Government, as at present constituted, does not possess the confidence of this House." In the course of the debate, Ward, on behalf of the Radicals, justified their vote for ministers by showing the hopelessness of expecting any of the reforms for which they were anxious from the party to which Graham belonged. There was thus a united Liberal vote, and it gave the Government a majority of twenty-one. This was a much larger support than they had lately been in the habit of receiving, but it did not give them any assurance of increased power : it was given rather against Peel than in favour of Melbourne ; it represented neither sympathy in the country nor loyalty in the House ; and it did not in the least prevent the Peers from treating the ministerial proposals with contempt.

Evidence of this was furnished when the Irish municipal question again came up. The ministerial proposals were very much milder than those which they had made when they first took office, but mild as they were the House of Lords made them still less effective. Morpeth moved the second reading of the bill on the 14th of February, and it was carried by 149 to 14, and the other stages were passed by large majorities.

As thus adopted by the Commons, the bill fixed the qualification for voting at £10 in the larger, and £8 in the smaller, boroughs, and it limited the rights of freemen. The second reading in the Lords was carried with the consent of Wellington by a large majority; but on the 29th of June, in committee, Lyndhurst carried amendments which made the qualification in the small towns £10 instead of £8, and preserved and perpetuated all the rights of freemen. Thus amended the bill was read a third time, and passed on the 31st of July, and went to the Commons. At first the House would not accept the amendments; but, as Lyndhurst would not give way, the Government had to do so, and on the 10th of August the bill received the royal assent. It was an unmistakable defeat and humiliation to the ministers, that after six years of contest they were unable to obtain what they believed to be justice for the people of Ireland. There has been little encouragement to the Irish to accept willingly a continuance of that union, under which they are subject to a Parliament in which the Whigs have been unable, and the Tories unwilling, to confer what they know to be their rights. Radicals could not hold power on such terms; to them justice to Ireland would form an essential condition of existence.

The most interesting events of the session were the debates on the corn laws, which gave evidence of the growing feeling in the country in favour of repeal, whilst they illustrated still further the weakness and want of unity in the Ministry. On the 1st of April Mr. Villiers brought forward his third annual motion on the subject. The debate was twice adjourned, but late on the third day, when Warburton moved another adjournment, and many of the supporters of the motion were absent, a division was pressed for and the adjournment refused by 245 to 129. Thereupon Warburton moved the adjournment of the House, which being carried the original motion became a dropped order, and Villiers was enabled to introduce it again. This he did on the 26th of May, when he was met by a scene of violence and disturbance

of the most disgraceful kind. The mover was interrupted, and other speakers on the same side were shouted down. In the course of what little debate was possible, Russell declared himself in favour of inquiry; but he said "he was decidedly opposed to the repeal of these protecting duties, whether on corn or manufactures." So little did he understand, or so little was he in unison with, the growing feeling of the nation. Melbourne was still less Liberal, for he opposed the resolution brought forward by Earl Fitzwilliam on the 4th of June, "that it is expedient to reconsider the laws relating to the importation of foreign corn." This resolution was defeated, the numbers being 152 to 34.

In the midst of distress and almost despair in the country, of failure and helplessness in Parliament, the session closed on the 11th of August. It was almost as much relief to the people as it was to the Cabinet to be done with the farce of legislation. It was seen soon afterwards that a competent Ministry could, by wise commercial policy and bold and honest finance, show the nation the methods by which to escape from the misery under which it was suffering. Melbourne's Government, however, incompetent to originate and feeble in administration, could offer no hope: but stood mocked by their opponents and mourned by their friends, trade decaying, workmen starving, and agitators inciting to violence, because the rulers had no help to offer. It was hardly to be wondered at, that during the winter the spirit which used to manifest itself in political activity turned in very hopelessness on some sides to disorder, on others to indifference. There seemed to be no interest excited when the period for the new session had arrived, for there was no reason to expect more activity from an Administration which was daily growing weaker, or from a Parliament distracted and divided without efficient leadership or definite policy.

Little surprise was felt when, on the opening of the session on the 26th of January, the Queen's speech contained no promise of important legislation. Reform in the Administration and the expiry of the powers of the poor law com-

missioners were the only two domestic subjects referred to, and these, although important in themselves, were not of a character calculated to excite interest in the mind of a nation whose people were suffering from a distress which in many parts amounted almost to famine. With such a programme it seemed almost like a profane farce to “humbly implore of Divine Providence that all your counsels may be so directed as to advance the great interest of morality and religion, to preserve peace, and to promote by enlightened legislation the welfare and happiness of all classes of my subjects.” The feeling of the Radicals as to the state of things which existed was well expressed by Grote, in the last speech which he was to make in Parliament. In the debate on the address, after objecting to the ministerial policy with regard to Turkey, which he considered endangered the peace of Europe and especially estranged the sympathies of France, Grote said, “If, in respect to our internal affairs, we are destined to obtain no further progress or improvement; if the cold shadows of finality have at length closed in around us, and intercepted all visions of a brighter future; if the glowing hopes once associated with the reform Ministry and the reformed Parliament have perished like an exploded bubble;—at least, in regard to our foreign affairs, let us preserve from shipwreck that which is the first of all blessings and necessities, that which was bequeathed to us by the anti-reform Ministry and the unreformed Parliament—I mean peace and accord with the leading nations of Europe, but especially with our nearest and greatest neighbour, France.” To this appeal Russell could only reply with commonplaces about his desire to maintain the institutions of the Established Church, the hereditary House of Lords, and the hereditary Monarchy.

The address in reply to the speech was agreed to in both Houses without a division; but this was the last sign of confidence or respect which the Government were to receive—all after this was defeat, reverse, and humiliation. They had suffered several disasters before they brought in the

budget, and it was generally believed that their financial and commercial proposals would be framed as much with a view to their effect upon the country as with any expectation that they would be carried in Parliament. The 31st of April was the day fixed for the financial statement, but before it was made, Russell gave notice that on the 31st of May he should move "that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to consider the Acts of Parliament relating to the trade in corn." This was exactly the resolution which Mr. Villiers had moved year after year, and its adoption by ministers was regarded as a bid for popular support in the election which it was known could not be much longer delayed. Identical in terms as the motion of the Government was with that of the League, it did not cover the same intention, a compromise in which the principle would be sacrificed being all that the new friends of free trade intended to accomplish. This was soon made known in the House of Lords, where, on the 3rd of May, Melbourne, questioned by Ripon as to whether the alteration in the corn laws was to be on the principle of taxation or protection, said, "Unquestionably it will be upon a principle of protection."

After Russell's notice the budget was brought on. It showed the usual and inevitable Whig deficit, amounting this year to no less than £2,421,000. The Chancellor of the Exchequer did not attempt to deal with the whole of this evil, but he proposed to mend it to some extent by changes in the duties on foreign timber and foreign sugar. He said nothing as to the proposed change in the corn duties, except that Russell's proposals would not seriously affect his calculations. This was felt not to be explicit enough to form the foundation of a financial scheme, and on the 7th of May, when the sugar duties were to be debated, Russell again interposed, before going into committee, with a statement that he intended to propose fixed duties on wheat of 8s., on rye of 5s., on barley of 4s. 6d., and on oats of 3s. 6d. per quarter. The discussion on the sugar duties then proceeded, Lord Sandon moving an amendment to the Government proposal. In the debate Peel

declared that he looked upon the question as one of confidence, and, while declaring his adhesion to a sliding scale in the corn duties, refused to submit a competing budget to that of ministers. On a division the numbers were—for going into committee, 281; against, 317, leaving Government in a minority of 36. This would have been enough for any ordinary ministers, but, to the surprise of the House and the country, Baring got up as though nothing particular had happened, and quietly announced that on the Monday following he should move the usual annual sugar duties.

This was a very calm way of taking a beating, but the fact was, that Government did not mean to resign until they had obtained all the benefit they could from their last move as to the corn laws. They were, however, no longer able to dictate even the terms of their capitulation. Russell fixed the 4th of June for bringing on his corn law resolution; but Peel immediately afterwards gave notice that on the 27th of May he would move a direct vote of want of confidence. The debate which arose on this motion extended over five nights, but on the 4th of June a division was taken which left the Government in a minority of one—312 voting with Peel, and 311 for Government. Even the Melbourne Administration could not stand against such a blow as this. They would not resign, indeed, for there was a bare chance that an election might increase their following; and they wished not to dissolve Parliament without submitting their corn law resolution, but, pressed by their conqueror, they declared that no time should be lost. The hope of success at the polls was not very promising, for the votes given in the House were consequent on those which had been cast in the country. In the previous year Buller's motion of want of confidence had been lost by twenty-one votes; Peel's was now carried by a majority of one, and this did not represent any defection of Whigs or Radicals, but was the result of changes in the representation made in the mean time. Between January, 1840, and June, 1841, there were ten gains by Conservatives and two losses, making a difference of sixteen on a division. There were

three moderate so-called Liberals in the majority, Lord A. Lennox, W. Long, and H. D. Goring; but their defection caused no surprise, and they could never have been relied upon as supporters. The vote had indeed been close on the Conservative side, for, whilst in January, 1840, they had nine absentees, there were none when Peel took his vote.* All business, except that absolutely necessary for carrying on the public service, was now suspended, and on the 22nd of June Parliament was prorogued by the Queen in person, and on the following day it was dissolved.

The elections, especially in the English counties, went against the Government. Their net loss was forty votes, equal to eighty on a division, so that before Parliament met it was known that Peel would have a good working majority.† The new Parliament assembled on the 19th of August, and on the 24th the Queen's speech was read by the Lord Chancellor. It seemed almost ridiculous to go through the process of preparing and delivering a royal speech advising Parliament to pursue a policy which it was absolutely known would not be adopted, and nothing but waste of time could result. The principal clause in the speech was that which stated that "Her Majesty is desirous that you should consider the laws which regulate the trade in corn. It will be for you to consider whether those laws do not aggravate the natural fluctuations of supply; whether they do not embarrass trade, derange the currency, and by their operation diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community." In both Houses amendments were moved declaring a want

* These details of the division are given in the *Times* of the 8th of June, 1841.

† The profit and loss are given as follows in the "Annual Register," 1841, p. 147 :—

	Conservative gains.			Liberal gains.		
English boroughs	38	...	...	31
„ counties	23	..	..	1
Scotch boroughs	2	...	...	1
„ counties	5	...	...	3
Irish boroughs	6	...	...	1
„ counties	4	...	..	1
			<hr/> 78			<hr/> 38

of confidence in the Ministry, and they were carried, that in the Lords on the first night, by a majority of seventy-two; and that in the Commons after four nights' debate, by a majority of ninety-one. The numbers in the latter case were—for the ministerial address, 269; for the amendment, 360. The end had come at last; on the 30th of August, Melbourne in the Lords and Russell in the Commons announced the resignation of ministers—the close of the Whig rule which had lasted eleven years.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR ROBERT PEEL'S ADMINISTRATION (1841-1846).

THE election of 1841 made a marked difference in the personal constitution of the Radical party, but its results affected still more materially its future policy and conduct. Two of the leading members, representing the thought and the activity of the party, now left, one for a time only, the other permanently, the House in which they had played a distinguished part ; and a third celebrated man, defeated now as a Liberal, returned afterwards to Parliament as a Conservative. Grote, whose great learning and business ability, devoted unreservedly to the popular cause, had given weight to the opinions and the proceedings of his party, retired from Parliament. His seat for the city was lost to the Liberals ; and Lord John Russell barely kept the third seat from a Tory competitor. Hume, whose constant attention to financial affairs had made him a distinct position, which his thorough consistent Liberalism also justified, was defeated at Leeds, but in the following year (1842) he was returned for Montrose. The case of Bulwer was different. He had worked with the Radicals heartily in their efforts to obtain Parliamentary reform, and given special and successful attention to the removal of the taxes on knowledge, which interfered as much with the political as with the general education of the people. There were some matters of practical importance, however, on which he did not agree with the party, the principal one being the corn law question. His defeat for Lincoln led to his absence from Parliament

till 1852, and during that period his disagreement with the Liberals developed, and when he next contested a seat it was as a Tory.

The additions made to the party were at the same time of great consequence, regarded either as furnishing assistance in the struggle then waging in favour of free trade, or as affecting the development of ideas and the course of action in the future. In both these respects the entrance into Parliament of Cobden and Milner Gibson, to be followed in two years by that of Mr. Bright, was important. Roebuck now regained his seat for Bath, but he did not long preserve his usefulness to his party. Able and vigorous he always was, but he manifested eccentricities of conduct, and tendencies to personal motives for action, which prevented him from giving consistent and valuable aid to the cause with which he had been so long associated. In these respects, no less than in undoubted intellectual power, he resembled to a considerable extent that erratic genius Brougham, for whom, in his history of the Whig Ministry, he expressed so much admiration, and with whom he formed for a time a close and congenial friendship.

Whilst the personal changes did not, on the whole, detract from the aggregate ability of the party, and rather increased its power to deal with the great subject which was exciting the mind of the nation, an alteration began to take place with regard to the relation of Radicalism to the other branches of Liberalism. The Radical element became more and more merged in the general ranks, and for some time neither thought of itself, nor was regarded by the public, as a distinct political organization which could affect directly the constitution of Ministries or the policy of Governments. The circumstances of the time combined with the disposition of individual members to effect this result. In the first reformed Parliament the Liberal majority was so enormous that internal differences could be developed and exhibited without any risk that a Tory triumph would be the consequence. At that time, too, the Radicals formed, if not a

numerical majority of the whole party, yet such an important section that if they had been sufficiently organized they would have been justified in insisting upon the recognition of their leaders in the constitution of the Ministry. They appear, as a rule, not to have felt either the desire or the necessity for such organization and separate action, and by degrees the Whigs thought it more politic to lean towards the Conservative rather than the Radical element—a policy which must have been always congenial to men like Melbourne and Palmerston, who had left, under the stress of excitement in the reform days, a party with which they had always much sympathy.

After the election of 1841, the conditions were altogether different. The united forces of Whigs and Radicals together were outnumbered by the Conservatives, and the two sections were quietly merged in one opposition. There remained, however, the same divergence of ultimate object—the Whigs desiring a return to office on the basis of a very moderate policy; the Radicals striving to achieve particular reforms, but with no great hope of directing the ordinary conduct of affairs. Without some considerable extension of Parliamentary reform it was impossible for them to obtain such numbers in the House of Commons as would justify them in looking for supremacy or equality in office, and such extension was beyond reasonable expectation for some time to come. To strive for it, indeed, was still the great distinguishing characteristic of Radicalism, and the extent to which it was pursued might fairly be taken as a test of the loyalty of members to their principles. In this matter the new free-traders were as faithful as any of the older Parliamentary Radicals, and more constant than some of them. An opportunity of applying this test occurred at the very beginning of the new Parliament. On the 28th of August, the day after the division which had unseated the Ministry, on the report on the address, Sharman Crawford, who now sat for Rochdale, moved an amendment declaring that the House felt it to be its duty to consider the means

of so extending and regulating the suffrage, and of adopting such improvements in the system of voting, as would confer on the working classes just weight in the representative body. On this proposal, Ward said that it ought not to be submitted at that time when there was no Government in office ; that the vote ought not to be taken as a test of the strength of the Radical party ; and that he should retire without voting. Roebuck, who, in the great debate which had just closed, had rebuked the Whigs for not having adhered to the principles of reform, expressed his agreement with Ward, and his intention also not to vote. Duncombe spoke strongly about this desertion, but there was little further debate. On a division, the motion was rejected by 283 votes to 39.*

This discussion was rather an isolated protest on behalf of a general principle, submitted in its vindication to the new Parliament, than part of a matured scheme to attain a definite object. The minds of the most earnest Radicals were set upon a purpose which they conceived to be pressing beyond all others, that of relieving by just legislation the terrible distress under which the people were suffering. What the amount of that distress was we can scarcely realize now. As one instance, we are told that there were in Leeds alone 20,936 persons whose average earnings were only 11½*d.* a week ; † and throughout the whole manufacturing districts similar ex-

* This division was the first in which Cobden had an opportunity of manifesting his Radicalism. The following is the list of the minority :—

Aglionby, H. A.	Fleetwood, Sir P. H.	Pechel, Capt.
Bell, J.	Gibson, T. Milner	Powell, C.
Blake, N.	Granger, T. C.	Rawdon, Col.
Blake, M. J.	Hay, Sir A. L.	Rennie, G.
Blake, Sir V.	Hill, Lord M.	Rundle, J.
Blewitt, R. J.	Hindley, C.	Seale, Sir J. H.
Bowring, Dr.	Johnson, Gen.	Wallace, R.
Bridgeman, H.	Johnston, A.	Wason, R.
Brotherton, J.	Layard, Capt.	Williams, W.
Butler, Hon. Col.	Marsland, H.	Wilson, M.
Cobden, R.	Murphy, F. S.	York, H. R.
Collins, W.	Napier, Sir C.	
Elphinstone, H.	O'Brien, C.	Crawford, S.
Ewart, W.	O'Brien, J.	Duncombe, T. S. } <i>Tellers.</i>

† "Villiers' Free Trade Speeches," vol. i. p. 275.

periences were being felt. At most periods the pressure of this misery would have incited the people to efforts for some change in the form of government, especially as it was being proved by the ablest reasoners and most eloquent speakers of the day, that the suffering was caused and perpetuated by laws which a wiser legislature could and would repeal. There was now a considerable amount of agitation going on for Parliamentary reform, Chartists' associations and complete suffrage unions being in active operation, especially in London and the midlands; but the greater part of the Parliamentary enthusiasm, the protest against the suffering, the struggle for improvement, were being concentrated and directed by the Anti-Corn Law League, against the monstrous system of monopoly by which the food of the people was deliberately made scarce and dear.

In their eager desire to save the lives of the people, the free-traders had no time and no inclination to stop and consider the comparative advantage of political methods. They felt bound to drive right on to the accomplishment of their purpose, using all the means and instruments which presented themselves—mainly, to be sure, the weight of that passionate public opinion which want and misery inspired, but not neglecting either the influence of official Whigs, or, if it might be obtained, the occasional help of Conservatives. They had no thought that the vast organization which their necessities compelled them to construct might be used for permanent political purposes, yet all the same corn law repeal was at this time a Radical idea; that is, it was rejected alike by Whigs and Tories, both of whom still believed in protection, and was advocated in Parliament by the same party which originated and developed every other great measure of reform. And this was seen in the first division on the subject which took place in the newly elected House of Commons. The result of those discussions, indeed, proved that the attacks of the free-traders were beginning to tell upon the position which they were storming. It was all very well for both the great parties in the State to retain their hold upon the county

constituencies by declaring their adhesion to the principles of protection, but when they both had to confess that the laws which they held to be essential must be modified in order to relieve the sufferings of a nation, they gave up the very essence of their argument. The Whigs had already done this when they proposed a small fixed duty in lieu of the sliding scale, and the Conservative Ministry were now to follow by greatly reducing the amount of the tax.

When they took office after the vote of the 30th of August, 1841, the year was too far advanced for Peel's Government to bring forward any financial or commercial policy of their own ; they merely proposed to carry out, with some trifling alteration, the plans of their predecessors, to prorogue Parliament early, and to use the recess for the preparation of their own scheme. It was pressed upon them, both in and out of Parliament, that the distress in the country was so acute that something ought to be done at once for its alleviation ; but the reply was, that to offer an ill-considered remedy for so great a disease would be only to increase the danger which existed. It was on the 16th of September that the House of Commons met after the re-election of all the members of the Government. On that day Peel announced his intention to reserve the consideration of his policy ; and on the 7th of October Parliament was prorogued, by a speech in which the principal feature was the expression of her Majesty's deep concern at the distress which prevailed.

The session of 1842 opened on the 3rd of February. The Queen's speech, after referring to the necessity for improving the financial position of the country, proceeded to say, "I recommend also to your consideration the state of the laws which affect the importation of corn, and of other articles the produce of foreign countries." Public attention was very much excited by the proposal to touch the corn laws, the more especially as the retirement from the Cabinet of the Duke of Buckingham, who was a thorough protectionist, seemed to indicate that a concession of some sort was to be made to the free-traders. The League increased its efforts to put pressure

upon Parliament, and the Whigs waited with interest to see to what extent the Ministry would bid against them on the great question. The suspense was not to be long continued, for on the 4th of February Peel preceded the motion on the address by a notice that on Wednesday, the 9th, he should move for a committee of the whole House to take into consideration the laws which affected the importation of corn. On the day appointed the Premier explained his proposal. It involved the maintenance of the sliding scale, but made reductions in the amount of duty, and varied the gradations by which it was lowered. Under the old plan, the highest duty on wheat was twenty-seven shillings a quarter, levied when the price was fifty-nine and under sixty shillings. Under the Government scheme, the highest duty would be twenty shillings, when the price was fifty and under fifty-one shillings. The rate when the price was fifty-nine and under sixty shillings, the point at which the highest rate was formerly charged, would now be thirteen shillings. There were alterations made in other parts of the scale, the minimum rate of one shilling being still reserved for the price of seventy-three shillings, and changes were also proposed in the method of obtaining the averages. Mr. Cobden at once denounced the proposal as an insult to the sufferings of a people whose patience had been extolled.

The general debate on the Government scheme began on the 14th of February, when Lord John Russell moved an amendment declaring—"That this House, considering the evils which have been caused by the present corn laws, and especially by the fluctuations of the graduated or sliding scale, is not prepared to adopt the measure of her Majesty's Government, which is founded upon the same principle, and is likely to be attended by similar results." Although he submitted no alternative proposal in his resolution, he argued, in his speech, in favour of a fixed duty. These, then, were the Conservative and Whig propositions—one a sliding scale with reduced but still exorbitant duties; the other a moderate fixed duty, imposed mainly for the purpose of protection to native agriculture.

The debate lasted over three nights, and on a division there were—for Russell's amendment, 226 votes ; against it, 349, giving a majority of 123 for Government. Then came the turn of the Radical proposal, the total abolition of all duties on corn, and this was submitted to the House by Mr. Villiers on the 18th of February, the Friday following the close of the former debate. Five nights' further discussion took place on this motion, which in the end was rejected by 393 votes to 90. Comparing the numbers in these divisions with those on the vote which changed the Ministry, we find that practically the Tories polled their whole strength for the maintenance of a high sliding scale. The Liberals, on the contrary, were divided—the Whigs, supporting a fixed, moderate, but still protective duty, obtained, by the aid of some Radicals who preferred repeal, but went for the Whig scheme as an alternative to the Tory proposals, 226 votes out of 269 given in August, 1841 ; whilst the Radicals, voting for their own plan of total repeal, counted ninety members, being thus about one-third of the Liberals.

The chief of the party of resistance, the Premier himself was, however, about to take a course which would form a preparation for the repeal which he now strenuously opposed. He had already, by the act of opening the question at all, done something to encourage reformers and alarm staunch friends of protection like the Duke of Buckingham. But the whole of his scheme of financial and commercial improvement which he commenced this year, and which forms his great claim to the remembrance and gratitude of his country, was, unintentionally perhaps, but irresistibly, preparing the way for the great measure which was to complete the edifice. In March, 1834, in a discussion on the corn laws raised by a petition from Liverpool, Peel had objected to free trade in corn as unjust to the landed interest, in view of the protection given to manufactures. He now proceeded to remove that objection by his reforms of the tariff, by which year after year he continued to astonish and delight the country. The account of the development of this policy forms the most interesting chapter in the history of the Peel Administration, and its

discussion occupied the greater part of the time of Parliament. The remedy which it applied to the distress in the country was effectual, but it was slow, and it was rendered unnecessarily so by the too long postponement of the repeal of the corn laws, without which its other provisions were incomplete.

The delay in the improvement of their condition was borne with difficulty by a people who were suffering distress of the most terrible kind, approaching often to that actual state of famine the occurrence of which in Ireland finally led to the ultimate triumph of free trade. It was to be expected that political agitation would be aroused, and that the people would seek a change of Government as the means of relief from misery which they knew to be increased, if not entirely caused, by the operation of laws which the masters of the existing constituencies were interested in maintaining. There was accordingly constant agitation going on with regard to Parliamentary reform, which was mainly directed by the Chartist and Manhood Suffrage organizations. The connection between these associations and the Parliamentary Radicals was less close than it had at one time been, but there existed nevertheless a good deal of sympathy and some amount of combined action. This showed itself on several occasions during the year. On the 21st of April Sharman Crawford moved a resolution declaring it to be the duty of the House to take into consideration the laws relating to the representation, "with a view of giving to every portion of the community a full, fair, and free representation in the Commons' House of Parliament." Ward, Villiers, Cobden, and Roebuck spoke in favour of the resolution, which was defeated by 226 votes to 67.

An occasion which tried still more the loyalty of the Radicals to their principles occurred a few days later. On the 2nd of May Duncombe presented to the House a great petition with nearly 3,500,000 signatures in favour of the six points of the charter. The petition, besides setting forth the prayer, went at great length into the social and political causes which made reform necessary. Among other things it advocated the disestablishment of the Church, some method of dealing with

the national debt, and the right of the Irish people to obtain a repeal of the Union. Advantage was taken of this argumentative matter to refuse consideration to the petition. On the 3rd of May, the day after its presentation, Duncombe moved that the petitioners be heard at the bar by themselves or their counsel in defence of the claims they preferred. The Whigs did not, as they might well have done, leave the ministerialists to deal with this proposal, but Macaulay and Russell took very early opportunities of opposing it. The discussion was not prolonged, the most characteristic part of it being Duncombe's opening speech, in which he said that the Chartists of to-day were the Radicals of former times. There was much in the petition which many of the friends of the people could not approve, and the clause about the repeal of the Union gave so much offence to reformers outside, especially to those in Scotland, that another petition was soon afterwards set on foot.* Under these circumstances, those who voted for Duncombe's resolution may well be regarded as thorough-going Radicals. There were 49 of them, besides the two tellers, and there were 287 votes against them.† More support was given to a motion in favour of one of the points of the charter, the ballot, which was introduced on the 21st of June

* "Life and Struggles of William Lovett," p. 264.

† The following is the list of the minority :—

Blake, Sir V.	Holland, R.	Scholefield, J.
Blewitt, R. J.	Hume, J.	Seale, Sir J. F.
Bodkin, J. J.	Jervis, J.	Somers, J. P.
Bowring, Dr.	Johnston, A.	Strickland, Sir G.
Brotherton, J.	Muntz, G. F.	Tancred, H. W.
Browne, R. D.	Murphy, F. S.	Thorneley, J.
Cobden, R.	O'Brien, J.	Villiers, Hon. C.
Collins, W.	O'Connell, D.	Wakley, T.
Crawford, W. S.	O'Connell, M.	Wallace, R.
Dalrymple, Capt.	O'Connell, M. J.	Ward, H. G.
Dashwood, G. H.	O'Connell, J.	Williams, W.
Duncan, Visct.	Pechell, Capt.	Wood, B.
Duncan, G.	Plumridge, Capt.	Yorke, H. B.
Easthope, Sir J.	Powell, C.	
Ellis, W.	Ricardo, J. L.	Duncombe, T. } <i>Tellers.</i>
Elphinstone, H.	Roche, E. B.	Leader, J. T. }
Fielden, J.	Roebuck, J. A.	
Hall, Sir B.	Rundle, J.	

by Ward, and which received 157 votes,—a considerable majority of the whole Liberal party.

The session closed on the 12th of August. It left the new minister with an increased reputation for practical ability. His financial proposals had been designed upon a broad and effectual scale, and they were so framed that they could be carried successfully through Parliament and put into immediate operation. This feature of the Government policy contrasted strikingly with the feeble and inefficient method of the Whig Administration, and the opposition could make no way against it. The people who really faced the Ministry with a power which was to grow were the Radical free-traders, who were encouraged by the fact that the Conservatives had been compelled to touch what was once considered the sacred ark of protection. They were not strong in numbers in Parliament, but they had behind them the force of popular opinion, increased to vehemence by the pressure of the distress which even the occurrence of a good harvest had been unable to remove. During the recess, indeed, the suffering increased rather than diminished, and the commercial reforms of the past session had not had time to effect the improvement which they were calculated to produce.

There were everywhere gloom and despondency, so that Parliament, which met on the 2nd of February, 1843, had its whole attention drawn to what Carlyle called the condition of England question. The Queen's speech referred to "that depression of the manufacturing industry of the country which has so long prevailed;" and on the 18th of February Lord Howick moved for a committee of the whole House to take that part of the speech into consideration. In the debate on the address, Peel had declared that the Government had not in contemplation any amendment of the corn laws, and the motion of Lord Howick was framed so as to ensure the support of the whole of the Liberals, who all wanted some change, the Whigs adhering to their idea of a moderate fixed duty, and the Radicals demanding entire repeal. As obtaining support from all sections of the party the proposal was successful, but

it did not rally a very large vote, the numbers being—for the committee, 191 ; against it, 306, giving ministers a majority of 115.

Mr. Gladstone, in the debate raised by Lord Howick, had spoken of having a very good *temporary* answer to those who asked why corn should, in the matter of taxation, be dealt with differently to other commodities. This, together with the Premier's own refusal to regard the subject as finally settled, gave great encouragement to the free-traders in the House to continue the agitation. The growing feeling that there could be but one real settlement, and the increasing power of the League, which was urging on the acceptance of the true remedy, were also telling on the structure of the Liberal party. Both these tendencies were manifested during the session, the corn laws being kept constantly before Parliament in one way or other. On the 14th of March Ward moved for a special committee to inquire if there were any special burdens affecting the landed interest, or any peculiar exemptions enjoyed by that interest. It had been often urged, in the debates on the corn laws, that the existence of special burdens justified protection, and it was a very telling challenge for the free-traders to ask for a searching inquiry. Those who had been loudest in the appeal to those alleged grievances were the first to resist the inquiry, and the motion was rejected by 232 to 133. It was only in the country, and not in the House, that such a discussion could produce its proper effect.

This was a sort of general Liberal attack, but the usual Radical and Whig proposals were afterwards submitted in due course. On the 13th of May Mr. Villiers brought on his annual motion for a committee of the whole House to consider the duties affecting the importation of corn, with a view to their immediate abolition. The debate lasted over five nights, and at times was very stormy. In the end the motion was lost, the numbers being—for, 125 ; against, 381, showing a majority of 256. This vote manifested a remarkable growth of opinion in favour of repeal. As compared with

the division in the previous year, the numbers voting for the motion had increased by thirty-five, and those against it had decreased by twelve. The increased support was of course drawn from the Whig side of the party, although the leaders were not yet converted, Russell and Palmerston both voting against the resolution. They still adhered to their special belief in a moderate fixed duty, which became every day more hopeless and less acceptable to the country. This was seen when, on the 13th of June, Russell moved for a committee of the whole House to consider the corn laws. The resolution did not specify the particular solution of the question aimed at, but the mover advocated it in his speech. The result was by no means a Whig triumph. Lord John received 145 votes only twenty more than were given for Mr. Villiers, although in this case Villiers, Milner Gibson, Brotherton, and other Radicals voted with him. The party was evidently rapidly undergoing the process of conversion, and the conviction of the leaders was only a question of time and increased popular pressure.

In the mean time, the Government was still further preparing the way for free trade, and the next step, by a sort of irony of fate, had to be taken at the instance of Lord Stanley, one of the most vehement of the protectionists. The Canadian Legislature, with a view of obtaining the right to send corn to England at a nominal duty, had passed an Act imposing a tax of three shillings per quarter on all wheat imported into the colony from any source except her Majesty's dominions. In consideration of this Act, the English Government now proposed to admit wheat from Canada on payment of a duty of one shilling per quarter, and flour at a proportionate rate. With regard, therefore, to wheat coming from Canada, or from the United States *via* Canada, the idea of a revenue-producing tax was abandoned, and the protection to English agriculture was reduced to the very moderate fixed duty of four shillings a quarter, three shillings of it levied in Canada, and the remaining shilling in our own ports. The resolutions approving this arrangement were submitted by Lord Stanley, and

gave rise to some curious cross-firing. They were opposed by some Liberals because they admitted the system of protection into Canada, and by some Tories because they reduced the amount of protection in England. They were, however, carried by large majorities, and a bill founded on them passed the second reading on the 2nd of June by 209 to 109. In the House of Lords the same confusion of parties took place. On the 4th of July, on the vote for going into committee on the bill, a debate took place. The Duke of Richmond opposed the measure, because it diminished the protection to the British farmer, and Lord Teynham because it was not a free-trade measure. It passed by a majority of fifty-seven to twenty-five, and became law.

Much of the time of Parliament was thus occupied in debates on the corn laws and on subjects related to them. A great part of the remainder was taken up by the discussion of an Arms Bill for Ireland. It did not much matter which of the English parties was in power so far as the treatment of the Irish people was concerned. Now under the Tories, as formerly under the Whigs, the substantial grievances remained. The land laws were unaltered; the municipal institutions were based on principles different to those of England; and the alien Church maintained its supremacy. Practical efforts were devoted to the suppression of the disturbances which bad government rendered inevitable. This Arms Bill of 1843 came up for second reading in the Commons on the 29th of May; it was debated step by step and clause by clause, the English Radicals assisting in the opposition, and it was not until the 9th of August that it was read a third time and passed. It was of course carried much more rapidly through the House of Lords—coercion has never met with prolonged opposition there—and only two nights were spent in debate over this specimen of the policy.

There was thus little opportunity, even if there had been any great desire, to press forward in Parliament the subject of constitutional reform. The desire, however, was not strongly manifested; and there has scarcely ever been a time when

there seemed to be less complete and active sympathy between the popular reform movement outside and the response to it inside Parliament. It was not that the Radicals in the House of Commons failed to recognize, or hesitated to express, the necessity for reform ; but there were causes which gave to their action in this matter a perfunctory character. The violence and folly of one section of the Chartists had contributed to this result. Unfortunately, Feargus O'Connor and his followers, who called themselves physical-force Chartists, had obtained the command of the largest following, and their direct incitements had led to riots which could do nothing but injury to the cause of reform. There were others who, like Joseph Sturge and William Lovett, entered a constant protest against this irrational and mischievous policy ; but their voice was not potent enough to allay the tumult, and it suited the enemies of all reform to associate the name of Chartist with the ravings and the conduct of the violent leaders and their misguided followers. During the autumn of 1842 there had been riotous proceedings in many counties, and in the spring Assizes of 1843 there had been trials and committals of Chartists in Lancashire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire. It was not easy for a Parliamentary party to work in unison with agitators of this kind. Another reason was to be found in the pre-occupation—and that constantly increasing—of the minds and energies of the most earnest Radicals in the great work which they had undertaken of setting free the food of the people, which up to this time was, as we have seen, an essentially Radical movement. Yet Parliamentary reform was not entirely neglected in the House ; enough was done to keep up a perpetual protest, although there was no appearance of forcing the question into immediate prominence. On the 18th of May Sharman Crawford moved for leave to bring in “a bill to secure the full representation of the people, and to shorten the duration of Parliament.” His object was, he explained, to obtain extended suffrage, annual Parliaments, the abolition of property qualification, the payment of members, and the ballot. Leave was refused by 101 votes to 32 ; but on

the 20th of June Crawford returned to the charge, with a resolution to repeal the Septennial Act. He was supported by twenty-three votes, amongst which were those of Cobden and Villiers, and opposed by forty-six, Russell and Wood being in the majority against him.

There has been no subject dearer to the Radicals, or more constantly striven for by them, than that of national education. We have seen how, early in the first reformed Parliament, the question was raised by Roebuck, whose effort was appreciated by the whole party, and of whom one of its ablest writers, John Stuart Mill, wrote at the time—"In the case of Roebuck, it is his title to permanent remembrance, that in the very first year during which he sat in Parliament he originated (or re-originated after the unsuccessful attempt of Mr. Brougham) the Parliamentary movement for national education." * It was unfortunate, therefore, that during this session Roebuck himself and other leaders of the party were compelled to appear in the character of opponents to a scheme for extending education. Their objection, it is scarcely necessary to say, was not made to the extension of education, but to the violation in the proposal made by the Government, of that principle of religious equality and freedom without which no really national system could be established in this country. In the controversy which has been raised by the proceedings in 1843, the extent of the ministerial plan has been exaggerated, and the stand taken by the Radicals has been misunderstood. The scheme was developed early in the year. On the 28th of February Lord Ashley moved that an address be presented to the Queen, asking her to take into consideration the best means of diffusing moral and religious education among the working classes. In speaking to this resolution, Sir James Graham sketched the outlines of the measure which he intended to introduce. It would provide for the compulsory education only of pauper and factory children. It proposed to limit the employment of factory children between the age of eight and thirteen years of age to six hours and a half per day, and to

* "Autobiography," p. 195.

require certificates that they had attended school at least three hours. To carry out the plan, Government proposed to make grants in aid of local exertion for the erection of schools, which were to be maintained out of the poor rate, and by a sum not exceeding threepence per week, or one-twelfth of the earnings of each child, to be retained by the employer in aid of the fund.

The objectionable features were the regulations as to the character and management of the schools. Religious instruction was to be given through the medium of the authorized version of the Scriptures, together with portions of the Liturgy, under the superintendence of the clergy of the Established Church. The trust clauses were, however, the most objectionable. There were to be in each case seven trustees, to consist of the clergyman of the district, two churchwardens, and four elective trustees, two of whom at least must be freeholders. The trustees were to appoint the master, but he must be a member of the Established Church, and the nomination must be approved by the bishop of the diocese. The right of inspection was reserved to the clerical trustees and to the committee of council. It is not surprising that this thoroughly church scheme was opposed by the Nonconformists; the wonder would have been that they should listen to its advocates for a moment. The Bill carrying out these proposals was introduced by Graham on the 8th of March, and came on for second reading on the 24th of the same month. The religious clauses were at once objected to by Ewart, Hume, Hawes, and other Radicals, and as they became better known to the Nonconformists a blaze of opposition was kindled such as is rarely seen. The meetings were numerous and unusually enthusiastic, and "the mass of petitions which was, in a very short space of time, poured into both Houses of Parliament exceeded all modern precedent." *

The opposition was stronger than any Government could resist. On the 1st of May Graham submitted amendments

* "Annual Register," 1843, p. 196.

which it was hoped would satisfy the Nonconformists, and the bill was recommitted. The alterations were inefficient, and on the 18th of May Roebuck raised the main issue clearly by moving a resolution against the inculcation of any religious opinions in State education. This was lost by a majority of ninety-six, sixty Radicals voting for it, and Russell and other Whigs against. It was found impossible to resist the popular feeling, and the education clauses of the bill were withdrawn. It violated the principle of religious equality, without being an efficient scheme of education. As Cobden said, it was ridiculous as a national scheme, because it would provide only for 60,000 children altogether. Another attempt was made to vindicate the same principle of religious freedom in education by Mr. W. D. Christie, who, on the 25th of May, moved for leave to bring in "a bill to abolish certain oaths and subscriptions in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and to provide for the extension of education in those Universities to persons who are not members of the Church of England." In the division, when Mr. Milner Gibson was teller with Christie, the numbers were—for the motion, 105; against it, 175.

Parliament was prorogued on the 24th of August, the Queen's speech declaring her Majesty's firm determination to maintain inviolate the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland. This was the reply of Government to the violent repeal agitation which O'Connell had been conducting during the year by means of monster meetings and anti-rent manifestos, in which one of the "three F's," fixity of tenure, was promised as a result of repeal.* On the 14th of October the great agitator and nine other repealers were arrested on charges of conspiracy, sedition, and unlawful assemblage, but the trial did not take place until the following year.

Parliament met on the 1st of February, 1844, in more prosperous times than had been known for some years past, and with the financial troubles overcome. The Queen in her

* Martineau's "History of the Thirty years' Peace," vol. ii. page 567.

speech was able to congratulate the country upon the relief from suffering and privations which at former periods she had occasion to deplore. Ireland was still the place over which clouds were hanging ; but the Government were determined to maintain the union, and Peel was far-sighted enough to know that in the land laws and the relation between landlord and tenant lay the root of much of the trouble which existed there. Accordingly there had been appointed that Devon Commission which for the first time gave Englishmen an opportunity of ascertaining, if not the whole truth of the case, at least enough to convince them, if they had studied it sufficiently, that the same laws and customs which prevailed in England were monstrously unjust when applied to the altogether different conditions of Ireland. If the lesson had been sooner learnt and applied, we should have been spared years of misery to Ireland, and disgrace to England.

It was hoped, both by the Government and the country party, that the diminution of actual distress would allay the agitation against the corn laws. No such result followed. The reform agitation still continued, and where an extension of popular power was claimed, one of the reasons urged for its necessity was that the tax upon food might be abolished. This was clearly put by Sharman Crawford, who, on the consideration of the address, moved an amendment to the effect that her Majesty be informed, that before supplies were voted the Commons would deem it their "first and most important duty to inquire into the various grievances complained of by the people, and to devise such measures as may be most effectual for redressing all just causes of complaint." Amongst the grievances Crawford enumerated unfair and inadequate representation in Parliament, class legislation, accumulation of capital and property in the hands of a few, taxation of food, and extravagant public expenditure. This was a very bold and broad application of the principle that redress of grievances should precede supply, and it found support only among the extreme Radicals. It was defeated by 285 votes to 29. Mr. Bright, who had been elected for

Durham in July, 1843, was in the minority.* Not satisfied with this reverse, Crawford followed up his proposal by an actual attempt to stop the supplies. On the 6th of February, on the motion for going into committee of supply, he moved an amendment, rehearsing at length the grievances to which he had referred in his former speech, and concluding with the assertion that the complaints “should be inquired into, and if found to be justly made, redressed before this House shall proceed to the voting of supplies.” For this motion he only obtained 22 votes, and there were 130 against it. Once more the indefatigable reformer returned to the charge. On the 14th of May he moved for leave to bring in a bill to extend the suffrage and secure the free representation of the people. On a division the numbers were—for the motion, 31; against it, 97.

The direct corn law campaign opened on the 12th of March, when Cobden moved for a select committee to inquire into the effects of protective duties on imposts on the interests of tenant farmers and labourers. The motion was defeated by a majority of ninety-one only, the numbers being—for, 133; against, 224. On the 25th of June Villiers brought on his annual motion, for a committee of the whole House to consider certain resolutions, one of which was that the corn law “is indefensible in principles, injurious in operation, and ought to be abolished.” The debate lasted over two nights, and in the course of it Lord John Russell gave proof that the work of conversion was going on. He had on former occasions voted against Villiers, now he meant to abstain, his

* The following are the names of the minority :—

Barnard, E. S.	Elphinstone, H.	Trelawney, J. L.
Bernal, Capt.	Fielden, J.	Villiers, Hon. C.
Blewitt, R. J.	Gibson, T. M.	Wakley, T.
Bodkin, J. J.	Gisborne, T.	Warburton, H.
Bowring, Dr.	Hindley, C.	Ward, H. G.
Bright, J.	Hume, J.	Williams, W.
Brotherton, J.	Johnson, Gen.	Yorke, H. R.
Cobden, R.	Plumridge, Capt.	
Collett, J.	Ricardo, J. L.	Crawford, S. }
Currie, R.	Roebuck, J. A.	Wallace, R. }
Duncombe, T.	Thorneley, T.	<i>Tellers.</i>

objection being less to the principle of free trade than to the sudden change proposed by the Anti-Corn Law League. The division was again more favourable than that of the preceding year; the majority in 1843 having been 256, whilst now it was only 204, the gain being in the reduced number of Whig opponents, many of them following Russell in abstention from voting.

Quite as important, in the view of the permanent settlement of the question, was the sign of suspicion and want of confidence on the part of some of the Tories towards the Ministry. Two cases occurred, during the session, of the relaxation of that discipline which is usually characteristic of the party. In the first instance, the principle of protection was not directly raised, but the feelings and prejudices of some of its advocates were affected. On the 5th of February Graham introduced the new Factory Bill, leaving out the education clauses, which had led to such trouble on a former occasion. The measure now submitted limited the hours of labour of children—between the ages of nine and thirteen—to six and a half hours a day, and that of young persons—between thirteen and eighteen—and women to twelve hours a day. The bill went into committee on the 15th of March, when Lord Ashley moved an amendment, declaring that the working day should close at six instead of eight o'clock. This, besides being acceptable to those who honestly desired to improve the condition of the working classes, was eagerly seized by some of the protectionists, who desired to do a bad turn to those manufacturers whom they regarded as the enemies of the landed interests. A long debate ensued, which was carried on to the next night, when, on a division, the Government was defeated, a majority of nine voting with Lord Ashley. Ministers would not accept the decision as final, but said that on another clause, when the number of working hours had to be definitely stated, they would move that the word "twelve" be inserted. On the 22nd of March this issue had to be settled, Lord Ashley moving as an amendment that the word should be "ten." An extra-

ordinary result followed, the house first rejected the Government proposal by a majority of three, and then threw out the amendment by a majority of seven.

In this peculiar predicament the Ministry had three courses open to them—to accept a compromise and offer to make the number of hours eleven ; to throw up the scheme altogether ; or to withdraw the bill and introduce a new one, without any limit as to working hours. They decided upon the last-named course, and they let it be known that this time they should regard the question as one involving the existence of the Government. This intimation was sufficient to recall most of their followers to obedience. The bill was introduced, was read a second time on the 22nd of April, and passed through committee quietly, the struggle being reserved for the third reading. That stage was reached on the 10th of May, when Lord Ashley moved the introduction of a clause limiting the hours of labour to eleven from October, 1844, and to ten from October, 1847. Two nights of debate followed ; the conversion of the Tories formed the subject alternately of rage and ridicule ; but in the end Lord Ashley's amendment was rejected by a majority of 138, and the third reading carried by a majority of 129. The victory was gained, but it was over their own friends, and left the position of the ministers very unpleasant.

The other and more important act of conservative insubordination took place with respect to a proposed alteration of the sugar duties. The Government proposed a reduction in the case of foreign free-grown sugars, which admitted them at a duty of thirty-four shillings, the colonial duty remaining as before, at twenty-four shillings. This proposal pleased neither the West Indian planters and their friends the protectionists, nor the free-traders, and a curious coalition was the consequence. Mr. Miles, one of the most decided of the protectionists, moved an amendment reducing the duty on colonial sugar from twenty-four to twenty shillings, and that on different classes of foreign sugar to thirty and thirty-four shillings respectively. The issue was confused, for at

first sight it appeared that the amendment would only cause a general reduction, leaving the amount of colonial protection the same. Cobden and the shrewder free-traders saw that this was a delusive promise, and that practically there would be an increase of protection. The free-traders, however, were divided, and Russell and the Whigs, seeing an opportunity of injuring the Government, went with the protectionists, and the result was a division which took place on the 14th of June, when there were—for the Government plan, 221; against it, 241, leaving ministers in a minority of twenty. This vote also, like that on the ten-hours resolution, the Cabinet refused to accept as final, and they demanded a reversion of it as a proof of the confidence of the House. On the 17th Peel himself stated the course which his Government intended to pursue. This was practically to reintroduce their proposal, and stake the existence of the Ministry upon its acceptance. It was not only that they objected to the nature of the amendment itself, but the conditions under which it had been passed would leave the Government powerless in the future. The House, then, had either to rescind its resolution or accept the resignation of the Ministry. This was a strong policy to proclaim. It was extremely unpalatable to the ultra-protectionists, and they resisted it as an attack upon the independence of the House. They found their most effective 'mouthpiece' in Disraeli, who on this occasion made the first of those attacks upon the Minister which formed the foundation of his own importance to the party. Russell also protested, but all in vain, for on a division there appeared for the Government, 255; against them, 233, giving what was, under the circumstances, a very substantial majority. It was plain, however, that the protectionists ceased to place their trust in the Ministry, and this was the most instructive part of the whole transaction.

The session was made memorable by the debates which arose in both Houses on the subject of the inviolability of letters sent for transmission through the post. On the 14th

of June the subject was opened by Duncombe, who presented a petition from Serafino Calderara, Joseph Mazzini, W. J. Linton, and William Lovett, complaining that their letters had been opened in the post-office. Graham acknowledged that in the case of one of the petitioners the allegation was true, and that in opening the letters he had exercised a right which the law undoubtedly gave to the officers of the Crown. There was a loud and general cry of indignation throughout the country, especially as it was thought that the inspection had taken place at the instance of a foreign government, and had endangered the lives of some of their subjects. This statement was denied, but Duncombe and his Radical friends obtained a special committee of inquiry, and a like committee was appointed by the Peers, at the instance of the Earl of Radnor. The inquiry resulted in the issue of reports which supported the statement that the examination of letters was legal ; that it was specifically provided for on the foundation of the post-office ; and that it had been used, although very rarely, by succeeding Ministries. There was no alteration of the law, but the vehement expression of public opinion has been of service to the cause which Duncombe espoused with such vigour and ability.

The cause of religious liberty did not want occasion for vindication by the Radical members during the year. On the 31st of May, when there was before the House of Commons a proposal for altering and amending the ecclesiastical courts, Duncombe moved to abolish them altogether, and to transfer their jurisdiction to civil courts. This was a proposal which, if adopted, would have struck at the foundation of a good deal of the difficulty which has arisen from the fact that ecclesiastical officers of the State have supposed that, because they have access to special courts, they ought not to be subject to laws passed by Parliament in the ordinary manner. Duncombe obtained seventy votes for his proposal, which was lost by a majority of forty-five. On the 11th of June Ward submitted his annual motion for a committee of the whole House upon

the present state of the temporalities of the Irish Church, the division showing—for, 179; against, 274.

The business of the session was at an end by the 9th of August, but the prorogation was delayed, in order that the House of Lords might have an opportunity of trying the appeal which had been made from the decision of the court in Dublin, in the case of O'Connell and his companions. The trial had been long and wearisome. It began on the 2nd of November, 1843, and it was not until the 10th of February following that the verdict was returned. O'Connell was found guilty on all the eleven counts. The Rev. Mr. Tierney escaped lightly, but the other prisoners were found guilty on nearly all the counts. Another delay took place, and it was the 30th of May before sentence was delivered. O'Connell was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £2000, and bound over to keep the peace for seven years. In the cases of the other prisoners the fine was only £50, and the term of imprisonment nine months, but all were bound over to keep the peace for the same term. It was against these verdicts that an appeal was made to the House of Lords, and Parliament was kept together until the case could be heard. On the 4th of September judgment was delivered, the decision of the court below being reversed, and the prisoners released. Four law lords only voted in the case, Lords Denman, Cottenham, and Campbell being for the acquittal, and Lord Brougham, strangely enough, voting against it. On the next day Parliament was prorogued. Soon afterwards, on the 7th of October, Lord Stanley was called to the House of Peers by the title of Baron Stanley of Bickerstaffe, an event of no little consequence to his party, affecting, as it eventually did, the leadership of the protectionists in the Commons.

The session of 1845 commenced on the 4th of February. The royal speech congratulated Parliament on the improved condition of the country. The contemporary chronicler says, "The harvest of the preceding autumn had been a productive one, trade was brisk, the manufacturing classes well employed,

and the abundance of capital was testified, among other symptoms, by the unprecedented number of new railway undertakings, more than two hundred schemes being prepared, at the commencement of the session, to apply for legislative powers. The revenue gave symptoms of continued advance, proving at once the substantial prosperity of the community by increased productiveness in some of its most important branches, and attesting the expediency of those fiscal alterations, in the reduction of import duties, which Sir Robert Peel had carried into effect." * If a temporary return of prosperity, and a more plentiful supply of food, could allay the agitation for free trade in corn, the hearts of the protectionists might have been relieved. In fact, however, there was no consolation for them. The very prosperity which was being celebrated was to a great extent owing to the partial application of those principles of commercial freedom which they hated ; the people in the country were every day rallying with more eagerness to the League ; the Liberals in Parliament were becoming more united on the question ; and, worst of all, the minister who ought to have been the bulwark of the cause of protection, was more than suspected of sympathizing with the enemy. The task of the Radicals in the free-trade struggle was nearly completed—how nearly they scarcely knew themselves. They had first appreciated the vital importance of freedom ; they had enunciated and proved the truth of its propositions ; they had, in the course of a long and arduous agitation, informed the public mind and aroused the public enthusiasm ; and they were fast convincing the governing class of both parties that there could be but one solution to the national problem. They had prepared the ground, had sowed the seed, had watched and guarded the early growth of the crop : and now the official reapers were about to undertake the part of gathering in the harvest.

The work of conversion amongst the Whigs had been going on rapidly. Only a few years back, Melbourne had declared that it was the wildest and maddest thing to think

* "Annual Register," 1845, pp. 1, 2.

of leaving the agriculturists without protection ; and Russell, whilst advocating a fixed duty, maintained that the tax ought to be levied not for revenue, but for protection. Now, in the debate on the address on the first night of the session, Russell said, "I am convinced that protection is not the support, but the bane of agriculture." The actual campaign was again opened by Cobden, who once more moved for a select committee to consider the effect of the corn laws on agriculture. He was strongly supported by Lord Howick, who was amongst the first of the official Whigs to accept the complete free-trade policy. On this occasion he startled the House and shocked the squires, after he had argued that monopoly made prices rise and wages fall, by quoting from the Bible the awful denunciation, "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth : and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." He expressed his deliberate conviction that, in consequence of the corn laws, the hire of the labourers who had reaped our fields had been kept back by fraud, and thought that as a nation we ought to take that solemn warning to ourselves. This strong language irritated, but did not convince the protectionists ; they wanted no inquiry, and rejected the motion by 213 to 121.

The protectionists were not content to stand merely on the defensive. On the 17th of March Mr. Miles moved—"That it is the opinion of this House that, in the application of surplus revenue towards relieving the burdens of the country by reduction or remission of taxation, due regard should be had to the necessity of affording relief to the agricultural interest." The motion was opposed by Sir James Graham, but it was used as an opportunity of protest by the ultra-protectionists against their desertion by the Ministry. Of this feeling Disraeli was making himself the mouthpiece, and his speech on this occasion contained some sentences which have become memorable. "Protection," he said, "appears to be in about the same condition that Pro-

testantism was in 1828. The country will draw its moral. For my part, if we are to have free trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the honourable member for Stockport, than by one who, through skilful Parliamentary manœuvres, has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and of a great party. Dissolve, if you please, the Parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this, at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative Government is an organized hypocrisy.” The defection, as shown by the vote, was serious, there being for the resolution, 78, all protectionists ; and against it, 213. The agriculturists were again challenged by Ward to explain the peculiar burdens to which Miles had referred. On the 3rd of June he moved for a select committee to inquire into the subject, but was defeated by 182 to 109.

Before this Russell had led what he hoped would prove a combined Liberal attack on the whole political position. On the 26th of May he moved a string of nine resolutions to the following effect :—

1. Declared the present state of political tranquility to be favourable to the consideration of measures for improving the condition of the labouring classes.
2. Pronounced against protective duties.
3. Was against the corn laws especially.
4. Pledged the House to an alteration of those laws.
5. Referred to an alteration of the law of parochial settlement.
6. Advocated a systematic plan of colonization.
7. Declared that the advance made in the education of the people had been satisfactory.
8. Recommended increased means of extending religious and moral instruction.
9. Was for an address to her Majesty on these resolutions.

These resolutions covered a wide area, but in no case were they founded on a really broad principle, as explained in the speech by which they were introduced. The general

statement against protective duties was almost contemptible when aimed against a minister who had done much to extend commercial freedom, by one who, during a long tenure of power, had scarcely attempted to touch the subject. As to the corn laws, Lord John, although he had declared against protection, still adhered to his idea of imposing a fixed duty, a proposal rejected by the earnest men of both sides. He was now, however, willing to reduce the duty from eight shillings, which he had for years advocated, to six, five, or four shillings, as the House might prefer—a kind of Dutch auction in which he obtained no new bidders. As regarded education also, he touched no solid ground; the very term “religious and moral education” showed that he was not prepared to grapple with the real difficulty which was in the way of the establishment of a national system. But what made the Radicals most dissatisfied was, that in an elaborate scheme which professed to deal with the questions affecting the labouring classes there should be no mention of any desire to extend their political privileges. Accordingly, whilst ministers were able to dispose of his new-born zeal for free trade, Crawford moved an amendment to insert in the first resolution the words, “to give immediate attention to the claims so repeatedly urged in petitions for an extension of the Parliamentary suffrage.” On this amendment, which raised one of the main issues between the Whigs and the Radicals, a division was taken, when there were 33 for, and 253 against.*

* On this occasion the reformers did not poll their full strength, but the list of the minority is given because it was the last important division on the subject during Peel's administration. The names were—

Baine, W.	Ellis, W.	Russell, Lord E.
Berkeley, Hon. H. F.	Etwall, R.	Tancred, H. W.
Blake, M. J.	Fielden, J.	Trelawney, J. S.
Blewitt, R. J.	Ferguson, Col.	Villiers, Hon. C.
Bouverie, Hon. E. P.	Granger, T. C.	Wakley, T.
Christie, W. D.	Hallyburton, Lord J. F.	Warburton, H.
Cobden, R.	Hill, Lord M.	Ward, H. G.
Collett, J.	Mitchell, H.	Wawn, J. T.
Duncan, G.	Metcalf, H.	Yorke, H. W.
Duncombe, T.	Pechell, Capt.	
Dundas, Hon. J. C.	Plumridge, Capt.	Crawford, W. S. }
Ellice, E.	Ricardo, J. L.	Bowring, Dr. } <i>Tellers.</i>

Russell's first resolution was lost by 182 to 105, and the others were withdrawn.

Villier's annual motion was introduced on the 10th of June. Russell this time made another step in advance. In 1843 he had voted against, in 1844 he had abstained, and now in 1845 he announced his intention of voting for the resolution. Peel was able to rally Lord John on this change of front, but neither the ministers nor the protectionists could fail to see that their case was daily growing more hopeless. The division showed—for the motion, 122 ; against it, 254, so that the majority had again fallen from 204 to 132.

A great part of the time of Parliament was taken up by the consideration of proposals of the Government with regard to the College of Maynooth, which engrossed public attention and aroused in all its bitterness the fury of religious intolerance. The determination to introduce the question had led to the retirement from the Ministry of Mr. Gladstone, who held that he was precluded by opinions, which he had previously published, from taking an active part in what he regarded, to some extent, as an endowment of the Roman Catholic Church. This resignation, regretted at the time, was not followed by any hostility to the Government or their measure, but its effect was no doubt felt at the close of the year, when Mr. Gladstone's sympathy and support in the Cabinet would have been invaluable to Peel in the final struggle on behalf of free food. What ministers now proposed to do with regard to Maynooth, was to vote a large sum to put the building in a state of repair, to fit it to become the seat of a national college, to enlarge the annual contributions for maintenance, and put the whole institution upon a permanent footing. These proposals gave rise everywhere to violent agitation and fierce discussions. The "no popery" cry was deafening, and men were ready to declare that ministers were acting in open defiance to the known will of the Almighty. The Radicals were not united on the question, although none of them joined the ranks of intolerance ; Roebuck supported the scheme as an act of

justice ; Crawford and Duncombe strongly opposed it because they objected to any endowment of religion. Even Cobden and Bright took different sides. Mr. Bright opposed the measure on the ground that an institution purely ecclesiastical ought not to be paid for out of the public taxes, and he denounced the Irish Church Establishment as the root of all that country's evils.* There was more union amongst both Radicals and Whigs on an amendment moved in committee by Ward—"That it is the opinion of this House that any provision to be made for the purposes of the present bill ought to be taken from the funds already applicable to ecclesiastical purposes in Ireland." For this there voted 148, against it there were 322. All the stages of the bill were passed, both in the Commons and the Lords, by large majorities.

The same fortune attended the Government proposals for the establishment of unsectarian colleges in Ireland. The bill, which was introduced by Graham on the 9th of May, provided for the erection of three colleges at a cost of £100,000, and their maintenance by an annual grant of £18,000. The Government provided no theological professorships, but these might be established by voluntary efforts by the different churches. The measure met with strenuous opposition from the extreme partizans of Romanism and Protestantism. The second reading was moved on the 2nd of June, the debate being continued over two nights by adjournment. The bill was carried by a majority of 311 to 46, and it passed the other stages in both Houses in an equally triumphant manner.

The principle of tenant right in Ireland was at last recognized by the Government, although no practical result followed. On the 9th of June Lord Stanley introduced a Tenants' Compensation (Ireland) Bill, which proposed to give compensation to tenants for their expenditure in three

* These opinions were expressed on the second reading of the bill, which was moved by Peel on the 11th of April, the debate being continued for six nights in succession.

cases, building, draining, and the removal of the cumbrous banks which took the place of fences. This bill was read a second time on the 24th of June, but it did not become law. Its introduction would have been an important matter but for the troubles and ministerial changes which followed, and which unfortunately diverted attention from the subject. Lord Portman endeavoured to follow this up by a proposal to give compensation to English tenants, but his bill was defeated on the second reading on the 26th of June.

The session closed on the 9th of August, with an outlook not so bright as that which marked its opening, but with no indication of the terrible extent of the trouble which was coming on. The gloom of the great disaster did not close over the country until some time after the prorogation, but symptoms of it speedily began to appear. Throughout the summer and early autumn there had been almost constant rain, chill and heavy rain, which made it certain that the harvest would be small in quantity and bad in quality, and that the nation would have to depend for its food upon a foreign supply. Soon a still greater misfortune was seen to be approaching, one altogether unforeseen and unprecedented. The potato disease was silently and rapidly destroying that crop upon which so large a portion of the people of Ireland especially depended, and the total failure of which would inevitably lead not merely to scarcity, but to absolute famine in many parts of that country. Fear and anxiety took possession of all minds, and all were anxious to know what ministers proposed to do. The League and the protectionists were especially interested. As the realization of the forebodings seemed to be more certainly approaching, it was everywhere admitted that some decided step must be taken with regard to the corn laws. Never since their first imposition was it supposed that they could be maintained in their entirety in a time of actual scarcity. On previous occasions they had been temporarily suspended, the ports being opened to meet cases of emergency. Now it was doubted, by the most earnest protectionists, if after such a suspension they

could ever be restored. Some expression was given by public men to the feelings which were so general. On the 10th of October Lord Ashley, a Conservative, wrote a letter to his constituents, in which he expressed his opinion that the corn laws could not be maintained. Early in November Lord Morpeth wrote to the League, and said, "I wish to record, in the most emphatic way I can, my conviction that the time is come for a total repeal of the corn laws." Finally Lord John Russell wrote to the electors of London the famous letter of the 22nd of November, in which he announced that he had given up the idea of a fixed duty, and was converted to the necessity of immediate repeal. "Let us, then," he wrote, "unite to put an end to a system which has proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people."

In the meantime the Ministry were impressed by the responsibilities imposed upon them. In the Cabinet, as elsewhere, the anxiety was accompanied by division of opinion as to the course which ought to be taken. The Prime Minister was the first to realize the necessities of the position, and he of course felt most deeply the responsibilities. Between the 1st and the 6th of October there were several Cabinet councils held, and Peel advised that, before it was too late, measures should be taken, either by opening the ports by an order in council, or by calling Parliament together in a fortnight, to obviate the impending evil.* The advice of the Premier was not taken, only three of his colleagues concurring with him, and the Cabinet separated on the 6th of November, Peel reserving the power of calling it together and renewing his recommendation if events should confirm his opinions. Accordingly the Cabinet met again on the 26th of November, the evidence which he had received in the interim not having diminished the apprehensions of the

* The history of these transactions, and of the ministerial crisis which followed is given in the speeches of Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell, at the opening of Parliament on the 19th of January, 1846.

Prime Minister. But an important change had been made in the position by the publication of Russell's letter. Whatever was done in such a time, if it were to have its proper effect on the country and to obtain the proper support in Parliament, ought to be, and to appear to be, the spontaneous act of the Government. After the Edinburgh letter, it would be thought and said that the Government were adopting the proposition of Russell. Even this risk, however, Peel was prepared to run, if the Cabinet had been united. Stanley refused to accede to the policy proposed by his chief, and he was not the only member of the Government who would have resigned. Under these circumstances Peel resolved to send in his resignation, which he did on the 8th of December. The Queen at once sent to Lord John Russell, and after some correspondence as to the support he was to expect from Peel in dealing with the corn laws, he undertook the task of forming an Administration. He failed mainly because Lord Grey declined to join him, the refusal being, it was understood, owing to the noble earl's determination not to become a colleague of Lord Palmerston's. On the 20th of December Peel was informed of this failure, and was commissioned to resume office. He undertook the task, and prepared to submit to Parliament those measures which he thought necessary to meet the emergency. Stanley alone of all his old colleagues refused to serve, and his place was taken by Mr. Gladstone, whose help both in council and in Parliament was most valuable.

It was under these conditions that the session of 1846 was opened on the 19th of January. The Queen's speech did not allude in direct terms to the corn laws, but, after referring to the previous repeal of prohibitive and relaxation of protective duties, it recommended Parliament to consider whether the same principles might not "be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in your power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufacture of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to insure the con-

tinuance of the great benefits to which I have adverted." The general meaning of this language was understood by every one, but the greatest anxiety existed to learn the precise manner in which the work was to be done. On the 27th of January, the day fixed for the ministerial statement, the House of Commons was crowded in all parts, and every word was listened to with the deepest interest. The speech of the Premier, in which he set out the various financial and commercial proposals of the Government, occupied four hours; but the part most interesting at the time, and the most important permanently, was the explanation of what was to be done with the corn laws. The provisions on this subject were far-reaching and thorough. In three years all duty on corn was to be abolished, except a nominal charge of one shilling a quarter to serve as a registration fee, so that the amount of imports might be ascertained. Thus the great central feature of the scheme was the abolition of protection. For immediate relief there were other provisions. Agricultural produce serving as food for animals, amongst which were reckoned buckwheat and Indian corn, was to be admitted duty free, and all colonial-grown corn at a nominal rate. The duties on foreign corn which were to expire in three years were immediately reduced, the effect of which was, at the then existing prices, to lower the tax from sixteen to four shillings a quarter. There were some provisions for relieving the agricultural interests. The cost of prisoners was transferred from the local to the imperial rates; an alteration was made in the law of settlement; and the highway administration was improved, consolidated, and thereby cheapened. The great thing, however, which absorbed all interest and gave rise to all discussion, was the slightly deferred but absolute repeal of the corn laws.

Thus the principle for which the Radicals had so long contended, to which the Whigs had been slowly converted, and which a vast popular organization had been created to promote, was at last carried out by a great Conservative statesman—but not with the consent of the Tory section of

his party. The stronghold of protection was defended to the last with desperate energy. The proposal that the House go into committee on Peel's motion was made on the 9th of February, when Mr. Miles moved "that the House do resolve itself into committee on that day six months." The debate was long and stormy, Radicals and Whigs supporting ministers, Protectionists passionately opposing them. The discussion extended over twelve nights, during which forty-eight members spoke for free trade, and fifty-five against. On a division, on the 2nd of March, there voted for the motion, 337 ; against it, 240, giving the Government a majority of ninety-seven. In committee, on the same night, Villiers moved that the duties on corn should cease at once, but was defeated by a majority of 187. The bill was brought in, and the second reading was moved on the 20th of March, when another long debate, extending over four nights, took place. The House divided on the 27th of March, when the numbers were—for, 302 ; against, 214 ; majority, 88. A final division was taken on the third reading, when the bill was carried by 327 votes to 229. In all these divisions—except that moved by Villiers, on which the vote was essentially Radical—the Government had the aid of nearly the whole of the Liberals, the opposition being almost entirely Tory.* In the House of Lords the bill was read a second time on the 25th of May, by a majority of 211 to 164 ; and was read a third time and passed on the 26th of June, without a division.

* The actual proportions as given in Hansard on the two great divisions, those taken on the 2nd and 27th of March, are as follows. The numbers in this case include the tellers, and vary to that extent from those in the text.

2ND OF MARCH.							
<i>Majority.</i>				<i>Minority.</i>			
Conservatives	...	...	112	Conservatives	...	...	231
Liberals	...	...	227	Liberals	...	...	11
			<hr/>				<hr/>
			339				242
27TH OF MARCH.							
<i>Majority.</i>				<i>Minority.</i>			
Conservatives	...	...	102	Conservatives	...	...	208
Liberals	...	...	202	Liberals	...	...	8
			<hr/>				<hr/>
			304				216

The work was done ; it was accomplished at the cost of the disruption of an ancient party, and the destruction of the power of a great statesman. With Peel, patriotism and a sense of public duty were stronger than the bonds of party ; with the protectionists, rage at the loss of vested interests, and hatred of the chief who had deserted their cause, overcame all other feelings. It was known that the Ministry could not long survive the passing of the Act to which they had sacrificed their party. On the very night when the House of Lords passed the Corn Law Bill, the Government were defeated and overthrown by a division in the Commons. In the beginning of the session they had introduced in the Peers a bill for the protection of life in Ireland, which was read a second time on the 24th of February, and afterwards passed. It was introduced into the House of Commons on the 30th of March, and was met by a determined opposition which delayed its progress, and it was not until the 9th of June that it came up for the second reading. Then the protectionists opposed it as a mark of want of confidence in the Ministry, and, after a debate which was frequently adjourned, it was, on the 26th, defeated by a majority of seventy-three, the numbers being—for, 219 ; against, 292. On the following night Wellington in one House and Peel in the other, announced the resignation of the Ministry. The speech in which Peel took his farewell of office was an eloquent vindication of his motives and his conduct, and his closing words cannot be too often quoted. "I shall leave a name," he said, "severely censured by many who, on public grounds, deeply regret the severance of party ties ; deeply regret that severance, not from interested or personal motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements—the existence and maintenance of a great party—constitutes a powerful instrument of government. I shall surrender power severely censured also by others who, from no interested motive, adhere to the principle of protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country. I shall leave a name execrated by every

monopolist, who, from less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit. But it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice." As was fitting, the last few words which expressed the national gratitude to Peel were delivered by Joseph Hume, the veteran Radical, who in days gone by had led the forlorn hope against the fortress which had now fallen, and vindicated the principles of freedom which were now triumphant.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM THE RESIGNATION OF SIR ROBERT PEEL TO HIS
DEATH (1846-1850).

ON the resignation of Peel's Government, Lord John Russell was called upon to form an Administration. The composition of the Ministry showed that the old tradition of the Whig party still prevailed; that the objects of the Government might be Liberal, that its efforts might be conscientiously directed towards promoting the well-being of the people, but that it must be administered by the members of the privileged families. There was some foundation for the repeated assertions of Disraeli, that the Whig aristocracy resembled the Venetian oligarchy in their determination to reserve within very narrow limits the area from which the rulers of the country should be chosen. The Tories have always been freer than their old rivals in acknowledging the claims, or, at all events, in availing themselves of the abilities, of new men. On the present occasion the Whig custom was rigidly adhered to. The policy which had led to the defeat of the Conservative Ministry was Radical, its ablest and most successful advocates were Radicals, and it seemed impossible not to recognize these facts in the formation of the new Government. They were recognized—in a way. A few Radicals were admitted to a position which enabled them, not to take part in deciding the policy of the Government, but to give it official support when adopted. Gibson and Ward and Sheil were in the Ministry, but not in the Cabinet; and so they were debarred from the independent advocacy of their old principles without

being able to force them upon the attention of the Cabinet ministers, of whom they were the colleagues without being the equals. Gibson was vice-president of the Board of Trade, an office which had been offered to, and declined by, Villiers;* Ward was Secretary of the Admiralty; and Sheil Master of the Mint. Hobhouse, it is true, was in the Cabinet; but he had served his apprenticeship to Whiggism, and had long ago forgotten that he had been a Radical.

The case of Sheil was perhaps the most striking. On his accepting office, he seems, either by his own act or by that of his constituency, to have ceased to claim or have been allowed even the name of Radical. In Smith's book, which is founded on official and local information, Sheil, in the election of 1841, is marked as Radical; in that of 1846, consequent on his appointment, and in that of 1847, he is marked as a Whig.† It was not long before he justified the change of name. Peel's Government had been defeated on a Coercion Bill for Ireland, which Sheil had vehemently opposed, and against which Russell had also spoken. Immediately after the formation of the new Ministry, they announced that the renewal of the Irish Arms Act would be one of the first measures to be pressed forward during the session. This was a lamentable instance of the want of consistency and firmness of the Whigs, of their unwillingness or inability to insist, when in office, on the adoption of principles which they had supported when in opposition. It was the kind of policy which has caused a large part of our Irish difficulties, by making it impossible for the Irish people to trust to the promises of any English party strong enough to affect the constitution of the Government. On this occasion the Radicals were instant and strenuous in opposition, but Sheil was silent. The one thing which would have rendered his appointment to office important—the exercise of a direct influence in the formation of the Irish policy—was wanting, and his countrymen might be excused for believing that a place given to a patriot was, if not a bribe

* "Free Trade Speeches," vol. i. p. lxiii., note.

† "The Parliaments of England," vol. iii. p. 246.

for, a direct inducement to, the desertion of active support to the national cause. The opposition of other Radicals was so strong, and the inconsistency of the Government so striking, that the measure had speedily to be abandoned. On the 7th of August the intention of ministers was announced in the Commons; the second reading of the Arms Bill was carried on the 10th by a majority of thirty-three; and on the 17th Lord John Russell announced its abandonment. He had done just enough to prove that his Government would be feeble in action as well as indecisive in policy.

The Parliament as well as the Ministry was disorganized. The Tory party was broken up, and the main body of the opposition formed by the protectionists, and led in the Peers by Lord Stanley and in the Commons by Lord George Bentinck, was not strong enough to threaten the existence of the Government. The Peelites, whilst almost bound to support the Cabinet which their own policy had put in office, were yet Conservative in feeling, and were a check, if one had been wanting, to anything like a forward policy by the Whigs. The Radicals, therefore, were relegated to their old place, where they had the duty of originating Liberal policy, of instructing and arousing public opinion upon it, and of gradually forcing it upon the attention and the acceptance of Parliament. One great disadvantage of this position was, that it gave their leaders no opportunity of obtaining an active acquaintance with the practical work of administration, and enabled the privileged classes, taking the benefit of their own injustice, to refer to the men who were really wise politicians as mere theorists, not qualified to undertake the responsibilities of government. It was a comfort to members, and no loss to the country, when the session closed. It had seen the performance of one of the greatest works which an English Parliament has ever accomplished, but it had passed out of the guidance of the statesman who had directed its policy, and was exhausted by the labour which he had induced it to undertake. The instrument itself was out of tune, and smaller performers could not restore the tone which it had produced

under the hand of a master. The prorogation took place on the 28th of August.

The continuance of commercial distress, aggravated by the deepening horror of the famine in Ireland, where a recurrence of the potato disease had left the people in a state of helpless misery, marked the opening of the year 1847. Men looked to the opening of the last session of the expiring Parliament, not for exhibitions of inventive statesmanship, but merely to see what temporary methods it could devise to alleviate the sufferings of a starving people. Parliament met on the 19th of January, the main interest of the Queen's speech being concentrated on the clauses relating to Ireland. Although the Coercion Bill had been withdrawn, the Queen was able to tell "My Lords and Gentlemen," that they would "perceive, in the absence of political excitement, an opportunity for taking a dispassionate survey of the social evils which afflict that part of the United Kingdom." The efforts of ministers were directed, however, to measures intended to relieve the immediate distress. The royal speech had said that various bills would be laid before Parliament which, "if adopted, may tend to raise the great mass of the people in comfort, to promote agriculture, and to lessen the pressure of that competition for land which has been the fruitful source of crime and misery." Ministers, however, had nothing to propose touching the action of the artificial land laws of Ireland, which, founded on those of England, were utterly inadequate to the social conditions of the sister country. Whilst the discussions of the proposals for relief were going on, Sharman Crawford introduced this most important question by moving, on the 11th of February, a resolution—"That no measure would be effectual which did not include such amendment of the laws of landlord and tenant as shall give to the improving tenant in occupation a sufficient permanency of tenure, or else establish the tenant's right to claim by law full compensation for all benefits created by the expenditure of his labour and capital on the premises in his occupation." This resolution was withdrawn with a view of bringing in a bill to effect its objects.

This was done, and the second reading was moved on the 28th of April. The debate was adjourned to the 16th of June, when, on a division, the bill was thrown out by 112 to 23. It was a curious commentary on the past policy of Whigs and protectionists alike, that the recent corn law, by which the duty on wheat was four shillings a quarter, had to be entirely suspended, as it was by a bill founded on resolutions introduced by Lord John Russell on the 21st of January.

Once more, on the 23rd of February, the old Parliament was challenged to give an opinion on the subject of electoral reform. The suggestion was a very mild one, Duncombe moving for leave to bring in a bill for repealing the rate-paying clauses of the Reform Act. Leave was refused by a majority of twenty, the numbers being fifty-eight to thirty-eight. In this division Milner Gibson, who had supported many much more extensive reforms, was in the majority. It must have been an unpleasant position, and it was one which he soon found insupportable; for in the following April he resigned office, and resumed his place beside Hume, Cobden, and the other Radicals. Ward was absent from this division, but he, unlike Milner Gibson, grew accustomed to official restraints unaccompanied by power.

The cause which stood next to that of reform in the opinions of the popular party—that of national education—made but little progress in Parliament. The policy of the Government was to continue and very slightly extend the system of grants in aid of voluntary efforts, through the medium of the committee of privy council. When the vote came up, on the 27th of April, Duncombe moved for the appointment of a committee to inquire into the whole subject, but was defeated by 372 votes to 47. He was supported by the Radical vote, Milner Gibson and Ward being both absent. There was, indeed, no possibility of taking any important step with a Parliament which was daily expecting to receive the dismissal which came on the 23rd of June, when it was prorogued and dissolved.

The general election of 1847 showed to how great an

extent the old party lines had been confused and party bonds loosened. It was the Conservative party which was most affected by this influence, and a new title had to be created by which for the time to designate those who had broken with the Tories without joining the Liberals. The name of the leader of the secessionists was chosen as that of the party, and the Peelites were entered in the returns and tabular statements of the time, in a column distinct from the Conservatives and the Liberals. The distinction could not be drawn very clearly, and some of the politicians of the day declined to accept any calculation of the relative strength of parties, either as regarded their allegiance to organizations or their adhesion to defined principles. The editor of the *Spectator* having been asked to classify the members of the new House, refused to do so, declaring that it was impossible to draw any distinct or arbitrary line.* The estimate generally accepted was that the Conservatives numbered 165; the Peelites, 161; and the Liberals, 327,—giving the avowed Liberals a majority of one only over the combined sections of their old opponents. Such a condition of parties could not but have a marked effect upon the political action of the Parliament. Ministers were dependent upon the Peelites for a working majority; but the Peelites had recently been the leaders of the Conservative party, and were not prepared to sanction or allow any constitutional changes in Church or State. The only matter on which they were, as yet, entirely agreed with the Liberals was as to the maintenance and extension of the free trade policy; and as this was exactly the point which the Tories wanted to attack, the alliance between Whigs and Peelites was on the whole likely to be continued.

This union, involving the possibility of advance on financial and commercial questions, but inaction with regard to general political and social affairs, had its effect at the other end of the scale, and added to the number of the Liberals who were prepared to sympathize and vote with the Radicals. It

* *The Spectator* for September 11, 1847.

was another instance of the action of the law of development which has been seen in operation so often in the course of our political history. It was, however, a position which for some time to come, whilst it removed any danger of reaction, made progress almost impossible ; and it had the inevitable effect of convincing a constantly increasing number of earnest people that the one way to insure healthy national life was to effect some change in the character of the constituencies. Unfortunately, there was a want of sympathy between the most active reform agitators outside and the majority of the Radical party inside Parliament. The Chartists generally had, unfortunately, rallied to the leadership of Feargus O'Connor, and although comparatively few of them accepted seriously his wild talk about physical force, the character of the whole movement was seriously affected by it. In the course of this and the following year, attempts were made to originate an agitation which, aiming at less extreme objects, and dissociated from the violent party, should combine the middle classes with the artisans in a demand for reform, under the leadership of some of the popular members of the House of Commons.

The election of O'Connor for Nottingham was one of the events which affected the personal composition of the party in Parliament. A few other changes also took place. O'Connell had died on the 15th of May, and there was no one who could act his part as a connecting link between Irish and English Radicalism. He had not been able to effect this completely, the repeal agitation keeping alive a cause of alienation ; but after his removal from the scene the division became constantly more complete, to the injury of both nations. Roebuck was again lost to the party by his defeat at Bath, and this may be looked upon as almost the final separation ; for, after his return for Sheffield in 1849, he never heartily united himself with his old friends. A new member, W. J. Fox, who was elected for Oldham, was useful as an eloquent exponent of extreme opinions, although he did not exercise any wide influence ; and a similar addition was made

to the ranks by the success of George Thompson, at Tower Hamlets. There was still little definite organization in the party. Duncombe and Crawford retained the confidence of the Chartists ;* Hume was regarded with respect by all sections ; Cobden, Villiers, Bright, and Milner Gibson were looked upon as the men who commanded the confidence of the middle classes, whilst full of sympathy for the popular cause. Molesworth, of all the party, retained more completely the characteristics of what were called the Philosophical Radicals, and his great intellectual ability and deliberation made him likely to be acceptable to the most Liberal section of the Whigs.

The new Parliament met on the 18th of November, the speech from the throne referring to the commercial crisis, to the distress and the prevalence of outrages in Ireland, and to the navigation laws. The business which occupied most of the time of the short session was the consideration of an Irish Coercion Bill, giving extraordinary powers to the lord-

* The manner in which Duncombe was regarded at this time by the Chartists may be seen from the following letter, written by O'Connor on his election for Nottingham :—

“ Paradise, Sunday.

“ BELOVED GENERAL,

“ In discharge of my first and far most pleasing duty, I called at head-quarters, Spring-gardens, on my arrival, to report myself, but was told you were not in town. I now perform my duty by letter, and beg to assure you that no monarch on earth ever had a more devoted subject, and no general a more obedient soldier. It will not be my fault if you are not the first man in your country. My terms are, that upon Irish questions I shall be free to act as I please ; in all else I *follow you*, but no other man. I will propose no national question of which you are the proper, the acknowledged, the loved leader ; nor shall adversity or prosperity ever banish from my recollection the boldness of my friend who visited me in my *dungeon*. My service is not like that of any other man when I give it ; life itself is offered, if needed.

“ Ever and ever, your fond, affectionate, and devoted friend,

“ FEARGUS O'CONNOR.

“ It would be morally impossible to describe the state of Nottingham. Lord Rancliffe, the two principal bankers, and most of the clergy, voted for me and asked me to dine ; and Smith, the banker, was chaired with us.

“ Yours,

“ F. O'C.”

—*Life and Correspondence of T. S. Duncombe*, vol. i. p. 373.

lieutenant. There seemed to be a fatality attending the Whigs in the treatment of subjects on which they were opposed to Peel. In 1835 they had thrown out Sir Robert's Government on the appropriation question, which they had afterwards to abandon ; and now, having joined in the majority which, by defeating the Coercion Bill in 1846, led a second time to his resignation, they found themselves, or thought they did, under the necessity of summoning the new Parliament to a special session in order to pass a more stringent measure. The bill was introduced by Sir George Grey on the 29th of November, and passed rapidly through all its stages in both Houses. There was little else to do ; the discussion of the financial difficulties attending the crisis did little more than fill up the intervals. The election of Rothschild for the city of London had brought to an issue the question of the right of Jews to sit in Parliament without taking an oath "on the true faith of a Christian." Russell moved a resolution affirming their eligibility, which was carried by a large majority, and on the 20th of December both Houses adjourned until the 3rd of February.

The year 1848 was the year of revolution, of the collapse of arbitrary governments before a sudden uprising of oppressed populations, and the influence of the events which took place first in France, and then in Prussia, Austria, Italy, and other parts of Europe, could not but be felt to some extent in England also. There was no suffering from actual oppression here, and the wise commercial policy of the last few years had relieved the severity of the distress which might else have carried disaffection into the region of violence and revolt ; but there was considerable depression still, which led to want and trouble amongst the population, and there was the sense of political injustice and inequality, which was felt more keenly when the people of other countries were, for the time, successfully vindicating their rights. The Chartists of the O'Connor faction became more violent in their demonstrations, and those of the more sober kind were anxious to form

an alliance with those Radicals in Parliament who, whilst sincere in their desire for reform, were prudent in their counsels, and were possessed of the confidences of the middle classes. Accordingly William Lovett was deputed, on behalf of an association called the People's League, to see "some of the leading reformers among the middle classes, such as Hume, Cobden, Miall, and others," and to confer with them as to the issue of an address in favour of the following objects:—1. The adoption of the charter. 2. The reduction of national expenditure. 3. The repeal of customs excise, and all indirect taxes. 4. A direct tax on property in an increasing ratio upwards according to its amount. When Lovett saw them with this scheme, "Hume and Cobden, while they expressed themselves favourable to our views of reform, were fearful that the middle classes could not be got to unite in any plan for its attainment. The chief point dwelt upon by both of them was, that O'Connor and his disciples had, by their folly and violence, made the name of Chartist distasteful to that class." Hume, however, anxious that something should be done, obtained the signature of about fifty of his friends to resolutions in favour of municipal reform and household suffrage.*

This decision prevented the union of the orderly Chartists with Hume and his friends, and led to open divisions in the country when the agitation for household suffrage was commenced in a systematic manner. A temporary advantage was thus gained by O'Connor, who obtained the enthusiastic support of numbers which contrasted with the more moderate demonstrations which the household suffrage party were able, or even wished, to elicit. The Chartist used his power in the wildest and most reckless way, encouraging appeals to force, and alarming those who were most disposed to assist him. The great petition, which was being signed under his directions, was in itself to be made not the means of laying before Parliament the wishes of the people, but the occasion

* "Life and Struggles of William Lovett," pp. 335, 336.

of an attempt to intimidate the Government and the Legislature.*

Parliament met to resume business on the 3rd of February. The revolutionary movement in France had already begun. The reform banquet fixed to take place in Paris on the 19th of January, had been interdicted by the authorities, and postponed in consequence by the promoters. It was to be held on the 22nd of February, and in the interval directions were issued as to the mode in which a procession was to be formed, and the National Guards were invited to attend in uniform, "for the purpose of defending liberty by joining the demonstration, and protecting order and preventing all collision by their presence." The meeting was again forbidden by the Government on the 21st of February; on the 24th the King abdicated the throne, a provisional government was formed, and the republic established. This rapid and successful revolution excited the imagination and aroused the energies of the people in nearly every nation in Europe, and thrones fell and constitutions arose as if by magic. The wave of feeling reached England now, as it had done in 1830, but its effect was the less extensive because the advance made in

* What Duncombe thought of these proceedings may be seen by the following letter:—

"Sidmouth, April 6, 1848.

"MY DEAR FEARGUS,

"Though absent, I am not an inattentive observer of passing events, and it saddens me to see a cause for which I have so perseveringly struggled—and I think in the right direction—now likely to be damaged by folly.

"I can, of course, make every allowance for reasonable excitement, but I cannot reconcile to my mind the folly of jeopardizing a good and just cause by extravagant language and foolish threats, which, as of old, can only have the effect of retarding progress and disarming its best friends.

"Nothing in my mind could be more ridiculous or cruel than to hazard the long-looked-for prospects of the people by any rash collision with the authorities, and those who adopt such a course will impose upon themselves a fearful responsibility.

"THINK ! THINK ! THINK !

and remember that one false step may seal the fate of millions.

"Faithfully yours,

"T. S. DUNCOMBE."

—*Life and Correspondence of T. S. Duncombe*, vol. i. p. 375.

1832 had been permanently secured, and the necessity for violent agitation was not generally acknowledged.

There was, however, some amount of excitement in the public mind, some response to the appeal made by the French Revolution, and there was a right and wrong way of trying to make use of it. O'Connor chose the wrong way, endeavouring to imitate the method of violent insurrection by which alone the people of France had been able to convince their Government of the earnestness of their desire for reforms. That method, even where, as in France, it seemed necessary, was of only temporary value ; in England it was not only unnecessary, it was impossible. Nevertheless O'Connor resolved to try it. Chartist demonstrations had been made in many places—in Glasgow, attended with rioting and violence ; in Manchester, Birmingham, and other places, with more or less vehemence. A great national petition in favour of the charter was being signed all over the country, and its presentation was to be the occasion of such a display of force as should overawe Parliament and coerce the Government. The day—the 10th of April—was fixed on which the great demonstration was to be made, a fact in itself sufficient to show the impossibility of its success. Revolutions are not made to order, and delivered in to time, in that fashion ; and the Government had no difficulty, with such a definite notice given to them, in preparing measures sufficient to avert any danger. And so the day came and went, and all passed off safely. There were to have been half a million people at Kennington Common ; there were about 25,000. O'Connor said there were 5,706,000 signatures to the great petition ; there were 1,975,496, and a great number of them not genuine. The demonstration in both respects was great and important ; the exaggeration did more than the opposition to lessen its effect and subject it to ridicule. The Chartist agitation died away on the 10th of April, but its effect was not altogether lost. There had never been any real danger of revolution, for there was no element in English political life to which such a course would be congenial. There was widespread

discontent with the existing state of things—discontent that the most numerous class of society should suffer distress, and have no constitutional method of expressing an opinion as to the making of the laws by which they might be helped. The outbreak in the spring of 1848 opened the eyes of thoughtful people to the fact not only of discontent, but of its justification, and the Radical party in the House took up the question of reform in a fresh and more practical manner, connecting themselves in a definite way with external organizations established for the purpose. It was some time before a triumph was effected, for the process had to be gone through of educating the Whigs, without whose co-operation no actual result could be obtained. Even that process was now commenced, and Lord John Russell took many opportunities of declaring that he had been misunderstood when it was thought that he had pronounced the Reform Act of 1832 to be final, or that he was absolutely opposed to any further advance.

The new movement found its first expression in Parliament on the 20th of June, when Hume moved—"That this House, as at present constituted, does not fairly represent the population, the property, or the industry of the country, whence has arisen great and increasing discontent in the minds of a large portion of the people: and it is therefore expedient, with a view to amend the national representation, that the elective franchise shall be so extended as to include all householders; that votes shall be taken by ballot; that the duration of Parliaments shall not exceed three years; and that the apportionment of members to population shall be made more equal." The debate which followed, and which lasted over two nights, showed that the question was now put upon a new footing, and demanded the attention of the governing class on both sides the House. Russell, as was said above, protested against being pledged to oppose all reform, and he even pointed out directions in which he would be prepared to suggest alterations. Disraeli opposed the motion, but he did so on peculiar grounds, and his speech might be regarded as the first lesson in that course of education to

which he afterwards said he had subjected his party. He objected to making property the only basis of the franchise, or to extending it merely in that direction. On the 6th of July the debate was continued, Cobden, Locke King, and Villiers being amongst the supporters, and on a division the resolution was lost, the numbers being—for, 84 ; against, 351. This was a larger and more important vote than any which had been given in favour of an extensive scheme of reform for some time past, and was indeed encouraging to the men who had now entered upon the work.*

During the session there were some interesting debates on the finances of the country. The Whigs had been, as usual, unfortunate in their management of these affairs, and the

* The list of the minority gives the first opportunity of judging of the number and character of the Radical party in the new House of Commons ; the following are the names.—It will be seen that Milner Gibson, having now left the Ministry, took his place in the ranks with his old friends.

Adair, H. E.	Fox, W. J.	Pilkington, J.
Aglionby, H. A.	Freestun, Col.	Raphael, A.
Alcock, T.	Gibson, Rt. Hon. T. M.	Reynolds, J.
Anderson, A.	Granger, T. C.	Ricardo, J. L.
Berkeley, Hon. H. F.	Green, J.	Roche, E. B.
Berkeley, Hon. G. F.	Hall, Sir B.	Salwey, Col.
Berkeley, Hon. C. F.	Hastie, A.	Scholefield, W.
Blake, M. J.	Headlam, T. E.	Scully, F.
Blewitt, R. J.	Henry, A.	Smith, J. B.
Bouverie, Hon. E. P.	Hindley, C.	Smythe, Hon. G.
Bowring, Dr.	Hodges, T. T.	Strickland, Sir G.
Bright, J.	Humphry, Ald.	Stuart, Lord D.
Brotherton, J.	Jackson, W.	Sullivan, M.
Caulfield, J. M.	Kershaw, J.	Talbot, J. H.
Clay, J.	King, Hon. P. J. L.	Tancred, H. W.
Cockburn, A. J. E.	Lushington, C.	Thompson, Col.
Collins, W.	MacGregor, J.	Thompson, G.
Cowan, C.	Meagher, T.	Thornely, T.
Crawford, W. S.	Marshall, J. G.	Trelawney, J. S.
Currie, R.	Marshall, W.	Turner, E.
Dashwood, G. H.	Molesworth, Sir W.	Villiers, Hon. C.
Devereux, J. T.	Mawatt, F.	Wakley, T.
D'Eyncourt, Rt. Hon. C. T.	Muntz, G. F.	Wawn, J. T.
Duke, Sir J.	Nugent, Lord	Willcox, B. M.
Duncan, G.	O'Connor, F.	Williams, J.
Evans, Sir De L.	Osborne, R.	Wilson, M.
Evans, J.	Pearson, C.	
Ewart, W.	Pechell, Capt.	
Fagan, W.	Pelo, S. M.	
		Hume, J. } <i>Tellers.</i>
		Cobden, R. }

estimates for the year, as set forth by the Premier on the 18th of February, showed a deficit of more than £2,000,000. To meet this it was proposed to raise the income tax from sevenpence to one shilling in the pound, or from three to five per cent. for the next two years. Cobden, Hume, and other Radicals, urged that the proper way out of the difficulty was not to increase taxation, but to reduce expenditure—beginning now a systematic attempt, continued for many years, in favour of economy. The proposal to increase the income tax raised so violent an opposition that on the 28th of February the Chancellor of the Exchequer came down to the House with an amended budget, abandoning the unpopular increase. He could devise no other method of meeting the deficiency except the last resort of spendthrifts—that of borrowing money to pay off debts. The scheme was laughed at, but there was no help for it, and it had to be accepted. This condemnation of their budget was not the only misfortune which befell ministers. They were known to be weak, and the Peers, as usual, took advantage of that fact to do as they liked with Liberal measures. The Jewish Disabilities Bill, to carry out the resolution passed in the autumn sitting, was read a second time in the House of Commons on the 7th of February, by a majority of seventy-three ; and read a third time on the 4th of May, by a majority of sixty-one ; but it was thrown out by the Lords on the 25th of May, by a majority of thirty-five.

Irish affairs took up a good deal of the session. Another Coercion Bill was passed, and the Incumbered Estates Act was intended to facilitate the transfer of land in the hope that the occupiers would be able, in some cases, to become the purchasers. It produced but little effect, because, founded on English notions, it only transferred the tenants' rights, as well as those of the old owners, to the new purchasers, and thus continued the greatest of all Irish grievances—the practical forfeiture of the property of the occupier in the improvements which were morally his own. The session closed on the 5th of September.

Immediately after the prorogation, an event occurred

which considerably affected the relation of parties to each other. On the 21st of September Lord George Bentinck died at Welbeck. On the break-up of the Conservative party, when Peel left office after the repeal of the corn laws, the protectionists, who formed the majority of the party, were left without any acknowledged leader in the House of Commons. Lord Stanley was recognized as the chief of the party, but he had no second in command to represent him in the Lower House. Disraeli was undoubtedly the man who by ability and courage had manifested his superiority, but it went against the grain with the country squires to follow the lead of a Hebrew romancist, whose peculiar abilities they feared as much as they admired them. Under these circumstances, Lord George, who had never been disposed to take a responsible part in affairs—having refused office when it was offered to him by Sir Robert Peel—consented to assume the position which no one else could fill. His leadership brought no disgrace to the party, for he was a man of more than ordinary ability, with the power of putting a case in clear and incisive language. He had the sagacity also to appreciate the services and the power of Disraeli, whom he treated rather as a colleague in the leadership than as a follower. On the death of Lord George there was no question as to his successor, and the squires fell into place under a commander who had to educate before he could use them. One effect of this acceptance of Disraeli's leadership was to cut off all chance of a reconciliation between the Tories and the Peelites, and the latter became more and more inclined to transfer their great administrative ability and the influence of their character in the country to the Liberal cause; and the Liberalism of the best of them was of a kind which could not rest in Whiggism, but had a tendency to broaden itself and rely increasingly upon direct sympathy with the masses of the people.

Parliament met on the 1st of February, 1849, the session being opened by the Queen in person. The speech referred to the civil war in Sicily; the rebellion in the Punjaub; the con-

tinued disaffection in Ireland, and the distress caused there by another failure of the potato crop ; and it recommended an alteration or repeal of the navigation laws. This was not a vigorous programme, but the Ministry were not in a vigorous state. They had been from the first dependent upon the assistance of the Peelites ; and that support, given heartily until the policy of free trade seemed secure, was now, if not withdrawn, at least considerably relaxed.* Whilst this was the case with the leaders, it was natural that many of the rank and file, who had left the Conservatives under the influence of a national emergency, but were generally more in accord with them than with the Liberals, should gradually return to friendly relations with their old party. This state of affairs gave trouble to the ministerial army on both wings, for it encouraged the Tories on the one side, and the Radicals on the other, to renewed exertions.

The Tories showed their sense of the improvement in their prospects by moving amendments to the address in both Houses, the two leaders, Stanley and Disraeli, taking the initiative. The amendments declared—"That neither your Majesty's relations with foreign powers, nor the state of the revenue, nor the condition of the commercial and manufacturing interests, are such as to entitle us to address you in the language of congratulation ; but that a large portion of the agricultural and colonial interests of the empire are labouring under a state of progressive depression, calculated to excite serious apprehension and anxiety." In the Lords the amendment was taken to a division, and the Ministry were only saved from defeat by the aid of the Duke of Wellington, and even by that help their majority was only two, the numbers being fifty-two to fifty. The attack in the Commons was less successful. It was opened by Disraeli, who marked and justified his accession to the leadership by a speech of great

* "The session of 1849 was remarkable chiefly for the neutrality of Sir Robert Peel, and for the state of debility into which the Ministry, in whom no man reposed confidence, consequently fell."—Doubleday's *Political Life of Sir Robert Peel*, vol. ii. p. 463.

brilliance and vigour. The debate lasted two nights. Ministers had no help in the way of speaking from the Peelites, but the opinion that they would receive their votes was confirmed when, at the close of the second night's discussion, a motion for further adjournment was defeated by 221 to 80 votes, and the amendment was withdrawn.

In the debates in both Houses, Ministers were taunted with having introduced in the speech the statement, that "the present aspect of affairs has enabled me to make large reductions on the estimates of last year," not from conviction, but as a concession to pressure from the Radicals in and out of Parliament. Stanley said, "I venture to state, openly and fearlessly, that it is not the aspect of affairs abroad or in Ireland, but the aspect of affairs in another place, which has induced the Government to make reductions." Disraeli had made merry over their conversion to the principles of financial reform; and Cochrane said that they were influenced by a pressure from without, and by a fear of Cobden. It was perfectly true that there had been a very strong expression of public feeling on the subject of economy. Associations for promoting the cause of financial reform were established in London, Edinburgh, and other large towns*—that of Liverpool being especially active in the diffusion of information and the expression of opinion. That the Ministry should be influenced by a movement so general in its character was natural enough; the strange thing was, that it should be urged as a charge against the head of a representative Government that they were desirous of carrying out the undoubted wishes of the people they were supposed to represent.

The opposition were right also in regarding Cobden as being one of the most important leaders of the agitation. The reputation which he had acquired during the corn law agitation secured an amount of attention which his ability in grasping, and explaining, financial and commercial questions amply justified. He had, moreover, the way of putting such a subject in a concrete and striking form, so as at once to attract

* "Annual Register," 1849, p. 153.

attention and excite enthusiasm. His plan, which he had developed during the recess, was to reduce the expenditure by the sum of ten millions, being the amount by which the current outlay exceeded that of 1835. This proposal he submitted to the House of Commons on the 26th of February, when he moved a resolution setting forth—that the national expenditure in 1835 was £44,422,000, whilst in 1849 it was £54,185,000; that the increase, owing mainly to augmentations of war establishments, was not warranted by the circumstances of the country; and that it was expedient to reduce the expenditure with all practicable speed to the sum which was found sufficient in 1835. A short debate followed, after which 78 voted for, and 275 against, the motion. The minority was practically a Radical vote, Hume acting with Cobden as teller.

This was not the only discussion on the subject. In addition to the debates when the budget was introduced, another special vote was taken. On the 8th of March Disraeli brought forward a motion to relieve the burden of the owners and occupiers of real property. This was a phase of the new protectionist agitation which had been vigorously commenced, and it was so treated in the discussion which followed, and in that respect the division seemed likely to form a more definite test of the strength of parties than had yet been afforded in the present House. The financial aspect of the resolution, however, gave Hume an opportunity of moving an amendment in favour of the reduction of the expenditure as the only means of relief to any class. The debate was twice adjourned, and the votes were taken on the 15th of March. There were—for Hume's Amendment, 70; against it, 394: and then came the party division, when Disraeli obtained 189 votes to 280, being left in a minority of ninety-one. This result was mainly owing to the votes of the Peelites. It showed the Tories that they would be unable to carry on the Government on protection principles; and it was no doubt remembered by the Conservative peers, when, on the 8th of May, they declined to exercise the power which

they possessed of throwing out the bill for repealing the navigation laws, and thereby destroying the Ministry.

This bill had been hotly debated in the Commons, and it had been carried by less than the usual free-trade majorities, having been read a second time on the 13th of March by 266 to 210, and read a third time on the 23rd of April by 275 to 214. It came before the Peers for a second reading on the 7th of May, which, after two nights' debate, was carried by a majority of ten only. It was known that the Conservatives could reject the bill if they chose, but they shrank from the responsibility, and on the third reading they left the House, and the measure passed. Another attempt was made at the end of the session to shake that composite majority in the Commons which was so fatal to the Conservatives. On the 3rd of July Disraeli moved that the House should resolve itself into committee to consider the state of the nation ; but it led rather to loss than to gain, the votes being—for, 156 ; against, 296, a heavier defeat than that of the 15th of March.

Whilst the Government were being thus attacked by the Tories on one side, the Radicals, on the other, displayed a great amount of activity, which was warranted alike by the ability of their leaders, their strength in the House, and their possession of the confidence of the majority of the people. The support of the Peelites was variable, and the hearty allegiance of a compact body of from eighty or ninety of the most popular Liberals was of great importance. There was not at this time any intention manifested by the Radicals to swerve from their loyalty to the general Liberal party, but all the same the earnestness of their convictions had to be taken into account, and it was constantly widening the area of their influence. On the question of Parliamentary reform they made, during the session, several demonstrations, some in detail, but one in general terms. On the 22nd of May Tennyson D'Eyncourt moved for leave to bring in a bill for shortening the duration of Parliament, and was defeated by a majority of five in a small House ; and on the 24th of May H. Berkeley introduced a motion in favour of the ballot, when

the numbers were—for, 85 ; against, 136. It was on the 5th of June that the more complete scheme was proposed by Hume, who moved for leave to bring in a bill similar to that for which he had asked last year—one that is to include household suffrage, ballot, triennial parliaments, and redistribution. On a division 82 voted with, and 268 against, the veteran reformer. The record of the numbers, however, was not the most important part of the proceedings. The education of some of the leading Whigs, and notably that of the Premier himself, was being effected. In the course of his speech on the motion, Russell was careful to repeat that he saw nothing in the Reform Act, or in any opinion he had expressed, that should debar him from adopting any plan by which the basis of the suffrage might be widened in favour of the working classes. In the course of a few years the progress of education had gone on so far that Lord John came to be considered by the official Whigs as being definitely committed to some system of reform. What seemed almost like the echo of an old agitation was heard on the 3rd of July, when O'Connor introduced a motion in favour of the charter, for which he obtained only thirteen votes.*

The Radicals kept the mind of the nation alive on other important matters, with regard to which immediate action was not possible, but the formation of sound opinion was desirable. On the 13th of March Trelawny moved—"That it is the opinion of this House that effectual measures should be immediately taken for the abolition of church rates." For this he obtained the full vote of the party, a division giving

* The names were :—

Fox, W. J.	O'Connell, J.	Walmsley, Sir J.
Greene, J.	Pearson, C.	
Heyworth, L.	Scholefield, W.	O'Connor, F. }
Hume, J.	Tancred, H. W.	Crawford, S. }
Lushington, C.	Thompson, Col.	} <i>Tellers.</i>
Nugent, Lord	Thompson, George	

It may be noticed that Roebuck and Hindley, two of the authors of the charter, who were both members of the House, Roebuck having been returned in April for Sheffield, did not vote for the motion.

84 for, and 119 against. Mr. Bright acted as teller with Trelawny. On the 12th of June Cobden moved a resolution in favour of international arbitration, but was defeated by 176 votes to 79. During the session a great advance was made towards the adoption of just principles in the management of the colonies, and the foundation of independent representative governments was laid. In this work Roebuck had for years been actively engaged, and he and Molesworth rendered service in the cause which deserves to be permanently recorded. The session closed on the 1st of August.

The protectionists had not yet given up the contest ; they still openly sought for an opportunity to reverse the decision in favour of free trade. In nothing did they differ so widely from the great statesman from whom they had separated themselves, as in this refusal to accept the verdict of the nation when it had once been decisively pronounced. Sir Robert Peel showed his wisdom most strikingly in this respect, that he never would become a reactionist. He opposed the Reform Bill, but when it was once passed he loyally accepted it, and directed his policy to applying it so as to serve what he believed to be the best purposes. If he had been opposed to the repeal of the corn laws, he would never have sought to reimpose them, at the cost of continued popular excitement and the unsettlement of the whole commercial and financial arrangements of the country. Stanley and Disraeli were not so wise ; they would not accept the inevitable, and, striving after the impossible, they lost the actual strength which they might have obtained by a reconciliation with the bulk of the Conservatives who were also free-traders. The agitation which was kept up was disquieting, even if it was not dangerous, and it was known that when Parliament again met the contest would be renewed.

The session of 1850 was opened by commission on the 31st of January. In order to give the most effective answer possible to the protectionists, and to show that the Government were at one with the Radical free-traders on the question, Mr. Villiers was specially asked to move the address

in reply to the Queen's speech, which set forth that it was "a source of sincere gratification to her Majesty to witness the increased enjoyment of the necessaries and comforts of life, which cheapness and plenty have bestowed upon the great body of her people." This selection of a mover was unusual in two ways: Mr. Villiers was a borough member, and the regular practice was for a county member to move the address; and he was an old debater and party leader, and, as such, outside the ranks of those usually chosen for so purely ornamental a purpose. The choice, therefore, marked the seriousness of the occasion, and his speech was regarded—and deservedly so—as a national manifesto on behalf of commercial freedom. The opinion of Parliament was at once challenged, amendments being moved referring to agricultural distress, and declaring it "mainly applicable, in our opinion, to recent legislative enactments, aggravated by the pressure of local taxation." Put in this plain way as an attack upon recent legislation, the amendment received the hostility of the whole of the Peelites; it was, indeed, the proposition which would insure to the Government the largest possible vote. In the House of Lords it was moved by the Earl of Stradbroke, and defeated by a majority of forty-nine; and in the Commons it was moved by Sir J. Trollope, and negatived by 311 against 192.

There were many of the Peelites, and some of the Whigs, who, whilst refusing to re-open the question of protection, were quite prepared to make concessions in other directions to the land-owning class, to which they themselves belonged. To these Disraeli appealed with more success when, on the 19th of February, he moved for a committee of the whole House to consider such a revision of the poor laws as might mitigate the distress of the agricultural classes. The debate was adjourned, and the division, taken on the 21st, differed widely from that taken on the amendment to the address, the numbers being—for the motion, 252; against it, 273, giving ministers a majority of only twenty-one, whilst they had secured a majority of 119 against Trollope's proposition. This

was a proof of the necessity of union between all sections of Liberals. The same lesson, too, was enforced by the result of another direct appeal in favour of protection on the 14th of May, when Grantley Berkeley moved for a committee of the whole House to consider the corn laws, and he was defeated by 298 to 184.

The uncertain nature of the tenure on which they held power convinced an increasing number of Liberals of the necessity for some Parliamentary reform which should give to what they believed to be the wishes of the majority of the people, a more direct constitutional expression. The Radicals, therefore, obtained larger votes than before on this subject. The most important of these occasions was when Hume, on the 28th of February, again moved for leave to bring in a bill, similar to that for which he had asked in the previous year, to provide for household suffrage, vote by ballot, triennial parliaments, and redistribution. The motion, which was seconded by Sir Joshua Walmsley, led but to a short debate, in the course of which Russell said, that although he negatived the motion, he did not therefore hold that the existing limits of the franchise must be permanently maintained. On a division, there appeared for the motion 96; against it, 242. As compared with the vote of 1849, this was an increase of fourteen supporters, and a decrease of twenty-six opponents. A still better result was obtained on the resolution in favour of the ballot, introduced by H. Berkeley, 121 voting for it, and 176 against. On the 9th of July Locke King moved for leave to bring in a bill to assimilate the county to the borough franchise, for which he obtained one hundred votes, the majority against it being fifty-nine. All these motions, and the reception they met with, proved the continuance of activity amongst the Radicals, and the growth of opinion in the Liberal party generally. Nor was this favourable condition affected by the fact that when O'Connor, on the 12th of July, proposed a resolution in favour of the Charter, the House was counted out.

The efforts to promote economy were continued. Without

attaining all that its advocates desired, the agitation in and out of Parliament had not been without result. The Government had entered honestly into the desire for retrenchment, and the budget of 1850 exhibited decreased estimates, and a balance favourable to some reduction of the national burdens. Encouraged rather than satisfied by this, Cobden, on the 8th of March, upon the motion for going into committee of supply, moved an amendment in favour of a reduction of the national expenditure, and based his argument on the fact of the unnecessary increase which had taken place since 1835. Hume, of course, joined in this debate with the greatest readiness, and he and Cobden were tellers in the division, when 89 members voted with them, and 272 against. An unexpected turn was taken in this direction by H. Drummond, the eccentric Irvingite Conservative, who on the 12th of March moved a resolution for the reduction of taxation. Whatever were the objects of the mover—Cayley, the seconder, openly advocated protection—the Radicals looked only to the terms of the motion, and voted for it, thus swelling the number of Ayes to 150, the Noes being 190.

Connecting the principle of responsible representative government with the desire for financial reform, came the proposal of Milner Gibson to establish county financial boards. This was the formal commencement of the movement for extending to the counties the same privilege of local self-government enjoyed by the boroughs, a movement which is yet awaiting its legitimate result, and the inception and early advocacy of which were due to the Radicals. The bill was favourably received by the Liberals generally. It was introduced on the 5th of February, passed the second reading on the 15th of March, and was then referred to a select committee—a gentle method of extinction. Many other important questions affecting the good government of the country and the principles of civil and religious liberty, by which alone that can be secured, were raised and supported by the Radicals in the course of the year. Some of these were of a character which deserved the early attention of Parliament,

and the neglect or delay of which has been detrimental to the country, and kept open controversies which ought long ago to have been settled. In this class must be placed the proposal made by Locke King, for an amendment of the land laws by facilitating transfer and abolishing the law of primogeniture. The motion was made on the 21st of March, 52 voting for it, and 110 against.

By far the most important part of the work of the Radical party at this time was that directed to the cause of national education, which they sought to promote in many ways and by various instrumentalities. The movement in Parliament had been prepared for, as usual, by discussion and agitation in the country. It is the old story over again. The members of privileged classes; the holders of hereditary power; the proprietors of vested interests; the ecclesiastics of a dominant sect;—all the people to whom social or political progress means inconvenience and loss of personal power or influence, are constantly talking about the rashness and inexperience of Radical politicians, and the danger of submitting the destinies of the country to the direction of the mob. It is well to appeal from this cry of interested prejudice to the facts of history and the teachings of experience, from which we learn that there is scarcely a measure which has tended to improve the moral, social, or intellectual condition of the nation; any course of policy which has given material plenty, social and political liberty to the people, or infused the principles of justice and the influence of conscience into our foreign policy;—which has not been originated by Radical teachers, accepted by the unrepresented masses, and at last forced by agitation upon Parliament and Government.

This was the case with regard to the legislation which freed the material food of the people, and it was so with respect to that more important intellectual food which elevates the morals and vivifies the mind. The peer and the priest, whilst they declared that ignorance ought to debar the many from political power, yet held that knowledge was a dangerous instrument to place in the hands of the people. So they

made teaching inaccessible, and books and newspapers dear, and then said that power should always go with learning. Against these doctrines the Radicals have always protested, and from the time when Roebuck, in the first reformed Parliament, raised the plea for national education, a constant effort has been made on behalf of that object. The agitation thus carried on was brought into a complete and systematic form after the close of the free-trade struggle. In 1847 an association was formed in Manchester, which was afterwards converted into the "National Public School Association," the object of which was to promote the establishment by law in England and Wales of a system of free schools, supported by local rates and managed by elective local authorities, to give secular instruction only, leaving to parents, guardians, and religious teachers the inculcation of religion, to afford opportunities for which it was proposed that the schools should be closed at stated hours in each week. The movement originated with Mr. Samuel Lucas, Mr. Jacob Bright, Professor Hodgson, Mr. Alexander Ireland, Mr. George Wilson, and the Rev. W. McKerrow. It won the support of the best-known Liberal politicians in the country, and Mr. Cobden devoted a large part of his valuable life to secure its success.*

On the 26th of February W. J. Fox moved in the House of Commons for leave to bring in a bill for national education founded mainly on the plan of the Public School Association, but leaving religious instruction an open question, and giving assistance to voluntary denominational schools for secular results. Leave was given, and the bill was ordered to be brought in by Fox, Henry, and Osborne. Between the introduction and the second reading an agitation on both sides was carried on, and the spirit of religious fanaticism was

* Adams, "History of the Elementary School Contest in England," pp. 151, 152. Mr. Adams says of this movement, "It had the benefit of the experience and machinery of the Anti-Corn Law League. The Liberal press advocated it almost unanimously. . . . Manchester now became the centre from which, under various conditions, an agitation was maintained unceasingly until the passing of the Education Act of 1870."

aroused. The debate on the second reading began on the 7th of April, and was continued on the 3rd of June. Russell opposed the measure, objecting both to its secular character and to the principle of free education. Sir R. Inglis accused Mr. Fox of neglecting the eternal destiny of the children; Lord Ashley took a similar view, and the evangelical opponents were joined with equal vigour by the Roman Catholic party.* The combination was too strong for the reformers, and the bill was rejected by 287 votes to 58.† It was after this defeat that, at a great conference at Manchester, the Lancashire Association was converted into the "National Public School Association," and the agitation was continued with increased determination.

More immediate success attended another effort made by the party to promote popular education. On the 14th of February Ewart, who then sat for Dumfries, obtained leave to bring in a bill to enable town councils to establish

* Adams, p. 154. He says, "From the high-priest point of view there was no good in the scheme, but only visions of Democracy! Socinianism! Communism! and Infidelity! and all these because it was proposed to teach the alphabet."

† The following are the names of the members who were wise enough, in 1850, to vote for a plan which the whole nation—when it was more efficiently represented—declared to be necessary in 1870:—

Adair, H. E.	Forster, M.	Sadleir, J.
Aglionby, H. A.	Fortescue, C.	Scholefield, W.
Anderson, A.	Fox, W. J.	Smith, J. B.
Anstey, T. C.	Green, J.	Strickland, Sir G.
Armstrong, Sir A.	Hall, Sir B.	Stuart, Lord D.
Bass, M. T.	Harris, R.	Stuart, Lord J.
Berkeley, Hon. H. F.	Henry, A.	Tenison, E. K.
Bouverie, Hon. E. P.	Heywood, J.	Thicknesse, R. A.
Brotherton, J.	Lushington, C.	Thompson, Col.
Browne, W.	Marshall, J. G.	Thornley, J.
Bunbury, E. H.	Melgund, Visct.	Villiers, Hon. C. P.
Cayley, E.	Milnes, R. M.	Wall, C. B.
Clay, J.	Milton, Visct.	Walmsley, Sir J.
Cobden, R.	Mitchell, T. A.	Williams, J.
Davie, Sir H. R. F.	Mowatt, F.	Willyams, H.
Dawson, Hon. T. V.	Muntz, G. F.	Wilson, M.
D'Eyncourt, Rt. Hon. C. T.	O'Connell, J.	
Evans, Sir D. L.	Pechell, Sir G. B.	Gibson, T. M. }
Ewart, W.	Pelham, Hon. D. A.	Hume, J. } <i>Tellers.</i>
Fergus, J.	Romilly, Col.	
Ferguson, Col.	Russell, F. C. H.	

public libraries and museums. The bill, as passed, was hampered by provisions which retarded its adoption and limited its operations. Many of these have since been removed, and the amount of good which the Act has accomplished cannot easily be estimated. Including those libraries established by private legislation, 113 towns in the United Kingdom have adopted Library Acts. Every provincial town in England of more than 100,000 inhabitants, except Hull, has adopted them. Apart from London, there are in England and Wales sixty-three towns of over 40,000 inhabitants apiece, with a population amounting altogether to 6,483,874. Forty-six of these towns have already adopted the Acts, and, since they were the most populous of the great towns, over five millions of the urban population of England and Wales enjoy the benefits of public libraries, supported by themselves and managed by themselves.* Ewart also moved, on the 7th of May, a resolution to abolish the advertisement duty; but he was defeated by 169 to 39, the minority being Radicals, and Milner Gibson acting with Ewart as teller.

In the contest which arose over the policy of the Government—or rather of Lord Palmerston—respecting the difference with Greece over the Don Pacifico and Finlay claims, the Radicals were divided. Roebuck and some others of the party supported Palmerston, because they believed that he intended to use the influence of England on behalf of constitutional governments in other countries; whilst Cobden, Bright, and Gibson represented a large section who maintained that strict non-intervention and non-interference were the true lines on which the nation ought to act. The peculiarly arbitrary conduct of the foreign minister towards Greece and France was scarcely defensible on any grounds, but this part of the subject was dwelt upon lightly by the Government advocates. The attack made in the House of Lords by Stanley was successful, the vote of censure being carried by

* Notes of a paper read to the Metropolitan Free Libraries Association, by Mr. H. R. Tedder reported in "Monthly Notes of the Library Association of the United Kingdom," vol. iv. No. 12.

169 to 139. Ministers took no action in consequence of this vote, and when questioned about it by Roebuck on the 20th of June, Russell laid down a principle which is fatal to the claim of the equality of the power of the Peers with that of the Commons. He said that while a change of government in consequence of a resolution of the House of Lords would be unconstitutional, it might produce great confusion in the State, and be to none so dangerous as to the House of Lords itself. So ministers intended to continue in that course which they had hitherto followed, and which had been condemned by the Peers. Roebuck, however, thought that the censure of one House ought to be met by a vote of confidence in the other, and he gave notice of his intention to propose such a resolution. This he did on the 24th of June, and a long and spirited debate followed, which was adjourned over four nights, the division being taken on the 28th of June, when the Government obtained a majority of forty-six, the numbers being 310 to 264.

The debate was rendered memorable by its being the occasion of the delivery of the last speech which Sir Robert Peel made in Parliament. He spoke against ministers, and after alluding to the merits of the Greek dispute, addressed a long and careful argument in favour of a policy of non-intervention. He believed that the cause of constitutional liberty would only be encumbered by our help, while, by obtruding that help, we should involve this country in incalculable difficulties. This speech was delivered on the 28th of June; on the following day he met with the accident which led to his death, and he died on the 2nd of July. The sad event was felt by all classes as a national calamity. There were differences of opinion amongst politicians as to the effect upon public morality of having measures carried by men who had long and consistently opposed them: there was no difference on the subject of the thorough conscientiousness of Peel on the two great occasions when he had shattered his party by reversing its policy, and there was a universal recognition of his ability. The belief in his honesty, and the gratitude for his services, were as universal as was the sorrow for his loss.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM THE DEATH OF PEEL TO THE RESIGNATION OF THE
ABERDEEN MINISTRY (1850-1855).

THE death of Peel had a great and almost immediate effect upon the position and fortune of English parties. It was a time when a change in the weight of personal influence made itself felt in an extraordinary manner. The Liberals, as we have seen, had a nominal majority of one only over the combined forces of Peelites and Protectionists, who, although strongly opposed on one subject, were united on general Conservative principles. The occasional antagonism had, like the quarrel of friends, aroused bitter personal feelings, which hindered re-union even when its original cause was ceasing to operate. The fiercest of these animosities had been directed against Peel, because it was his powerful genius which had induced the defections from the old party lines which had twice carried into effect Liberal policy by Conservative votes. His removal, therefore, paved the way for a gradual reconciliation on the part of some at least of the men who had followed him. On protection itself they could not give way, but short of that they were willing to make concessions to the landed interests, and they were anxious to prevent changes in Church or State.

The Liberals on their side were divided in opinions, the Radicals being desirous to force on reforms, to which a large section of the Whigs were opposed. So far as the death of Sir Robert removed a hindrance to union between the two sections of the Conservatives, it made the ministers more dependent

upon the Radicals. It did more than that, for, as it tended more to equalize the balance of political power, it convinced some at least of the Liberal leaders that important changes must be made. A step might be taken in one of two directions. A coalition with a considerable number of the Peelites would give the Government a fair working majority ; but it was doubtful how many of the rank and file the leaders would carry with them in an alliance, which would mean the adoption to some extent of Liberal policy. On the other hand, the Whigs, if they were not careful, were likely to lose as much by the secession of Radicals as they would gain by Peelite adhesions; and they would lose, besides, that hold upon public opinion which would be secured by loyalty to Liberalism, even if it did not take a very active form. There was only one other course, and that was called for as much by the absolute necessities of Government as by the interests of the Whigs themselves. If they could not strengthen themselves by coalition with Conservatives they must gain power on the Liberal side, and as it seemed impossible to do that with the existing constituencies, a reform in the system of representation was clearly desirable.

The position was difficult to manage, and ministers were most unfortunate in their attempt to deal with it. They tried both methods, but did not succeed well with either. Their first efforts were directed to coalition, but an event occurred soon after the loss of Sir Robert Peel which complicated affairs considerably, and very much deranged party calculations. Parliament was prorogued on the 15th of August, 1850, in the midst, as it was thought, of a political calm ; but in a couple of months later the country was in a blaze of excitement and indignation over what was known as the " Papal aggression." By a brief, dated the 30th of September, Pope Pius IX. created one archbishopric and twelve bishoprics in England with English territorial titles. This brief was promulgated in England with a pastoral by Cardinal Wiseman, the newly created Archbishop of Westminster, dated the 7th of October. Both these documents were pitched in a key of triumph on the restoration of England to the pale of the Roman Catholic

Church. The matter and the style were both offensive to the feelings of English Protestants, and especially to the clergy of the Anglican Establishment. The anti-popery cry was immediately raised with great vigour, and unfortunately Lord John Russell joined in the agitation, and in a letter to the Bishop of Durham, dated the 4th of November, he said, "The present state of the law shall be carefully examined, and the propriety of adopting any proceedings with reference to the recent assumptions of power deliberately considered." The Government was thus suddenly committed to action in a case where, as it afterwards proved, effective legal action was impossible.

It was in the midst of the excitement caused by these events that Parliament met on the 4th of February, 1851. It was not long before ministers found that, however sincere may have been their conviction that an offence had been committed by the pope, they had made a grave political error in their haste to deal with a religious question by the action of the law. When they came to consider the course which it was possible for them to take, they could propose no remedy which did not seem ridiculously feeble when compared with the evil which they described. They found, also, that they were opposed by the two sections of politicians, from one or other of which alone they could derive support enough to maintain themselves in power. The Peelites and the ablest of the Radicals alike declared themselves against the policy adopted by the Ministry, and they had to rely for anything like hearty approval of their policy upon the most bigoted section of the old Tory party. There was no amendment to the address, but Roebuck, immediately after it had been moved and seconded, rose and expressed the pain he felt at finding an Administration calling itself Liberal about to take a backward step.

The Government Bill was introduced on the 7th of February by the Premier. Lord John had to admit that, after consultation with the law officers of the Crown, he found that neither by the common nor statute law could the mere assump-

tion of titles be prosecuted as an offence. To proscribe such assumption was, therefore, clearly an infringement of existing liberties. The motion to bring in the bill was resisted by Roebuck, Bright, Hume, and Frederick Peel, and it was supported in a contemptuous speech which was worse than opposition by Disraeli. The debate was continued through four nights, although on the 14th of February the votes were—for the introduction, 395, and against it only 63. But the moral effect of the measure was gone, and ministers, while certain to carry it through Parliament, were equally certain to lose in character and influence by their action. Before the time came for the further stages of the bill to be entered upon, the weakness of the Government had been demonstrated in the House and acknowledged by themselves. The proper exponents of the cry of religious intolerance to which the Whigs had bowed, were the extreme Church and State Tories; for any section of Liberals would be bound, even whilst they introduced, to limit the terms of, repression.

The first sign of ministerial unpopularity was given on the occasion of a resolution moved by Disraeli on the 11th of February, declaring—“That the severe distress which continues to exist among the owners and occupiers of land, lamented in her Majesty’s speech, renders it the duty of the Government to introduce without delay measures for their effectual relief.” The motion was debated for two nights, and ministers were supported in their resistance to it by the Radicals and the Peelite leaders. It did not appear, however, that the latter could rally the full strength of their party against a resolution which did not nominally set up the principle of protection, and the death of Peel had already done something to weaken the bonds of union. When the division was taken on the 13th of February, there voted for the motion, 267; against it, 281, leaving Government with a majority of only fourteen. In the previous year a resolution of a similar character had been rejected in a smaller House by a larger majority. This proof of waning power was followed by another still more embarrassing, the attack coming then from the opposite quarter.

An increasing number of Liberals were beginning to feel that the only way in which legitimate strength was to be gained for their principles was not by clever trimming between opposing sections in Parliament, but by some change in the representative system by which public opinion could make itself more directly felt. This feeling was appealed to by Locke King, who, on the 20th of February, moved for leave to bring in a bill to assimilate the county and borough franchises. Lord John Russell now made a statement which showed that his education had advanced very rapidly. He did not restrict himself to a general statement that he was not absolutely opposed to all reform, but said that some reform was desirable, and that a measure should be introduced for a further extension of the suffrage. There were reasons, however, why such a measure should not be brought in this session, though there would be no reason why it should not be brought before the House at the commencement of the next session ; and if he were a member of the Government then, he should feel it his duty to lay such a proposal before Parliament. This was a definite promise which was very acceptable to the reformers ; it encouraged them, however, to push the present motion to division, when they obtained a majority of forty-eight against the Ministry, the numbers being one hundred to fifty-two.

The climax was reached when the financial proposals of the Government were received with such general expressions of disapproval that it was evident that they could be carried only with great difficulty. The accounts showed a surplus of £1,890,000, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to appropriate £1,000,000 to repayment of debt, and part of the remainder to the conversion of the window tax into a kind of house duty, and to continue the income tax. The strongest objections were raised to the maintenance of the income tax and the refusal to repeal the window tax unconditionally. The financial statement was made on the 17th of February ; on the 20th the division took place on the Franchise Bill, and on the 21st the Ministry resigned. Such rapid acts of statesmanship

had rarely ever been witnessed in the English Parliament. The Houses had only been in session a little over a fortnight, and already three important divisions had taken place, parties had displayed themselves in new combinations, and a Government had retired. The various causes which led to the resignation did not prepare the way for a strong Ministry to succeed. The Peelites seemed to hold the fate of Government in their hands, but they were so peculiarly placed that they could not definitely ally themselves with either party, although, as was explained by Lord John Russell and Lord Stanley, they were applied to by both.* They could not agree with the Tory party on account of its continued adherence to protection, and there were other political and personal grounds which made such a coalition impossible. The personal reasons may be understood from the violent attack which, when he was, a few months later, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Disraeli levelled at Graham and his friends. The cause which kept Whigs and Peelites apart was a more isolated and less permanent one—the course which the former had taken with respect to the papal aggression. Russell had already begun to find out the mistake he had made in this business, and he offered to modify his bill in almost any way to suit the views of the Peelites. No modification, however, would meet the case, and complete withdrawal was impossible.

So all negotiations went off, and there was nothing left but for the old Ministry to return to office—with a knowledge, however, that the way had been opened for an ultimate union with the party which held the balance of power in its hands. The position and the immediate duty of the Radicals were alike affected by these transactions. They were Liberals and free-traders, and were of necessity anxious to prevent the accession to power of that Tory section of the Conservative party who were avowedly reactionary with respect to commercial policy, and opposed to any advance in the direction of constitutional liberty ; who regarded the agitation for reform

* The full statements were made on the 28th of February, in the Lords by Lord Stanley, in the Commons by Lord John Russell.

as the "tide of democracy" which they were called upon to stem. Some concession, too, had been made by ministers, and the Premier had pledged himself to introduce a bill for the extension of the franchise. It was not probable that more than this could be gained by direct pressure, and it was uncertain whether the increased dependence on the Peelites, which must result from the defection of Radicals, would not tend to Conservative rather than to Liberal action. All possibility of future power for the popular party depended upon some amendment of the parliamentary system by which the people would be able to speak for themselves. The promise of some advance made by Russell tended, therefore, to repress separate action on the part of the Radicals, and so to prevent the better organization which would have enabled them to secure that direct representation in the Government which their numbers and ability would have justified them in demanding.

When the Ministry, therefore, was reconstructed, the Radicals had to pursue their old course of securing, not practical adoption, but continuous discussion of their policy. On the 2nd of April Locke King's bill for extending the franchise in counties came up for second reading. On this occasion the Whigs, who had supported its introduction, now returned to their strict obedience to Government, and Tories and Peelites went the same way, with the result that 299 voted against the bill, and 83 for it. This number represented the solid Radical vote. On the 2nd of May Fox moved a resolution in favour of the establishment of free schools for secular instruction, under representative local management, and was defeated by 139 to 49. A larger number supported Berkeley when, on the 8th of July, he introduced his annual motion for the ballot. This proposal had always secured more support than any other branch of reform, and it now obtained 129 votes, 242 being recorded against it.

The Government, by the aid of one section or other of their opponents and allies, got through the business of the session without further disaster. They amended their budget,

consenting to the absolute repeal of the window tax, and defeating a formal amendment challenging their financial policy, which Disraeli moved on the 30th of June, by a majority of 242 to 229. They also passed their Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, with many concessions and amendments, in a final form which, after the fierce prelude by which it was introduced, was perfectly ridiculous—all the thunders of ministers and bigots resulting in a clause by which any person using such titles as those created by the pope should be subject to a fine of £100. Weak as the provisions were, they proved entirely unworkable, and it was not long before the sound policy of Radicals and Peelites was openly justified by the repeal of the Act. On the 8th of August the session which had witnessed such unexpected changes was brought to a close.

Again the recess proved as fruitful in important events as the session, and when Parliament re-assembled, on the 3rd of February, 1852, it was met by a Ministry which had lost one of its strongest, most self-reliant, and, as far as Parliament went, its most popular members. In December of 1851 Louis Napoleon had accomplished his great *coup d'état*; had destroyed the constitution which he had sworn to maintain; had imprisoned the members of the assembly who dared to resist his will; had deluged the streets of Paris with blood; and had banished from France the most distinguished men who had served her in politics, in arms, in literature, in art, or in any form to which independent thought was necessary. To the author of these crimes the Foreign Minister of England had hastened to express approval and sympathy, and he had been dismissed from his office. It was a righteous judgment, but it was not awarded in consequence of the real offence. The Foreign Secretary was dismissed, not because he had shocked the moral sense of the country, and committed England to the praise of assassination and the encouragement of a conspirator; but because he had broken through the routine of court and official etiquette, and had not informed his chief or his sovereign of his intentions before they were

carried out.* Palmerston, whilst he had outraged public feeling by his hasty approval of the *coup d'état*, had given some satisfaction to the people by the favourable views he was known to have entertained towards Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, who, in the autumn of 1850, had visited England, but had been denied that official reception which, but for the pressure of the Premier, the Foreign Minister, it was thought, was willing to allow.

There would, therefore, be necessarily much difference of opinion as to the propriety of Palmerston's dismissal; but it was evident to every one that, necessary or not, it would be a serious loss to the Government, and materially weaken them in Parliament. In less than a month he had shown his power, and revenged himself on the Ministry by its destruction. This action left Lord John with only just time to introduce and describe the new Reform Bill, of which all that can be said is, that it was useful as a definite official declaration of the necessity for a change. On the 9th of February Russell moved for leave to bring in a bill which was to lower the borough franchise from a £10 to a £5 rating qualification; to give county votes to £20 rated occupiers, and to persons who paid forty shillings a year assessed taxes and lived outside a borough; to enlarge some small boroughs, but not disfranchise any; to abolish property qualification; to alter the oath which excluded Jews from Parliament; and to make some slight changes in the Scotch and Irish franchises. The announcement of the provisions of the measure was received without enthusiasm. It was accepted by the Radicals, but not as a satisfactory proposal; and it was evident that it had no element of vitality, and could make no appeal to that popular support which alone could overcome the dead weight of opposition on both sides of the House. Leave was given for its introduction, and that was the last that was heard of it, until the author himself moved its abandonment. The only

* The account of the transactions is given in Lord Russell's speech in Parliament on the opening of Parliament on the 3rd of February, and in Martin's "Life of the Prince Consort," ch. xliv.

reason why the bill received any attention was that it had been introduced by the Premier, and soon Lord John ceased to hold that position.

The catastrophe happened on the 20th of February, when Russell moved for leave to bring in a bill for the amendment of the militia law and for the maintenance of a local militia. A description of the proposed measure had been given on the 16th of February, and Palmerston had then intimated his intention to move amendments, which he now proceeded to do. His proposal was to continue the form of a general militia, and to increase and strengthen it, and he moved to omit the word "local" from the description, and to add the word "consolidate." The issue was as to the nature of the force to be raised, and that was clearly a matter for the Ministry, and to alter their proposition would be an expression of want of confidence; for if they could not be trusted to arrange for the national defence, they could not be really the Government. After some debate, a division was taken which resulted in the defeat of ministers, the numbers being—for Lord John's motion, 126; against, 135. In the division most of the Radicals had voted with ministers, and the Peelites and Tories with Palmerston.* The Premier said he considered that the vote showed that ministers had no longer the confidence of the House, and the natural result followed. On the 23rd of February the resignation of the Government was formally announced, and the Earl of Derby † had undertaken to form an administration.

There was no choice but to submit to a Tory Government, unless a dissolution had been determined on, and that, indeed, would not have been likely to change the relative strength of parties. A coalition between the Whigs and the Peelites would, on grounds of general policy, have been possible; but on this particular occasion Russell's followers and the Peelites had been in different lobbies, and an immediate

* Amongst the supporters of Government were W. J. Fox, Milner Gibson, Sir B. Hall, Hindley, and Hume; on the other side were Gladstone, Herbert, Palmer, Disraeli, and Lord John Manners.

† Lord Stanley had succeeded to this title on the death of his father on the 30th of June, 1851.

junction was impracticable. There must therefore be another Ministry on sufferance, not only without a majority in the House of Commons, but known to be opposed to the opinion of the country generally on the most immediately interesting political subject—that of free trade. On this very question, which they were pledged to raise in some form or other, they were met by the combined hostility of all other parties, Russellites, Palmerstonians, Peelites, Radicals—all were determined to resist the change which the only possible Ministry were obliged to propose. The position was too confused and complicated to be permanent. The Radical free-traders, at all events, were determined that public opinion should be heard; and on the 2nd of March the Anti-Corn Law League was revived at a meeting, when £27,000 was subscribed in ten minutes in order to support a determined agitation against any return to protection. Approaches had been made by the new Premier to Palmerston, but this question of protection made impossible a coalition, which else might well have been effected, for it was in free trade alone that Palmerston was a Liberal, and he was a determined opponent of any advance in the direction of Parliamentary reform.

On the 27th of February the new Premier explained in the House of Lords the policy which he intended to pursue. He did not disguise the fact that he was in favour of a duty on corn, but he did not propose to introduce any legislation on the subject until an opportunity had been given of a “reference to the well-understood and clearly expressed opinion of the intelligent portion of the community.” There was to be no corn law until there had been a dissolution, but the Government were anxious to obtain a decision in favour of one. Of course the Tories would not proceed with the Reform Bill; and as to education, which, Russell had said, ought to follow the extension of the franchise, Lord Derby “did not care for the mere acquirement of temporal knowledge or the development of the intellectual faculties, but for that education which was built on the basis of all knowledge—the study of the Scriptures.” For the promotion of such educa-

tion he relied with confidence on the Established Church, and to uphold that Church in its integrity was not only the interest but the duty of Government. The Radicals, at least, were warned of the effect, financially, politically, and socially, of having a Tory Ministry in office, and the warning may account for a good deal of endurance of delay and neglect on the part of Liberal Administrations, when the alternative was a system so reactionary and obstructive.

It was, under the circumstances, impossible that any measure involving controversial principles could be carried or even proposed. The Government were continually receiving notice of the frailty of their tenure of power, and, under the form of requests for an explanation of their policy, were reminded that a dissolution was expected, and that they must act only with moderation until it had taken place. Several useful bills were introduced and carried. The militia was enlarged and reorganized, and some legal reforms were effected. The budget was essentially a provisional one, for the commercial policy of the country could not, under the circumstances, be touched; and the income and property tax was simply continued for another year. The Whigs, of course, could make no important proposals; but the Radicals were free to continue the policy of educational agitation, which it was their special duty to carry on, and the opportunity was favourable for the work. There was no Liberal Government to be injured by a resolution in favour of reform, as had happened with the division on Locke King's motion, and therefore the way was open for a good vote. The strength of the party was not, however, materially increased, thus showing that it was not only the leaders, but the majority of the Whigs who required education.

On the 25th of March Hume brought on his annual motion for electoral reform and the ballot, and was defeated, receiving 89 votes to 155. On the 30th of the same month H. Berkeley brought on the question of the ballot separately, and as usual obtained a larger amount of support, the numbers being—Ayes, 144; Noes, 246. The introduction by Locke

King of a resolution in favour of the assimilation of the county to the borough franchise, which he moved on the 27th of April, led to an important discussion, in the course of which Disraeli said that the Reform Act contained one great deficiency—a want of consideration of the rights of the working classes to the franchise, and he professed that the Government would be ready to consider any well-devised plan for repairing the deficiency. The debate on the whole was encouraging, and so were the numbers—149 votes for the resolution, and 202 against. Milner Gibson continued his efforts to obtain a repeal of the taxes on knowledge, and was evidently gaining strength. On the 22nd of April he proposed—"That arrangements be made that will afford a repeal of the paper duty." The debate was adjourned to the 12th of May, and on a division there were 107 votes for, and 195 against. In nothing was the foresight of the Radicals better illustrated than in their proposals with regard to Irish affairs. Crawford was amongst the first to insist that it was essential to the well-being of that country that the system of land tenure should be amended. He introduced a bill to secure tenant right, which, after being once talked out, came on for second reading on the 5th of May, when it was defeated by 107 to 57. Amongst those who were wise enough to vote for it were Cobden, Bright, and Walmsley, but they were wise before their time; it wanted distress, disturbance, and almost revolution, to convince the English Parliament that Irish ideas ought to be represented in Irish legislation.

The Parliament was prorogued and dissolved on the 1st of July, and it was remitted to the constituencies to settle finally whether or not the food of the people should be taxed for the advantage, nominally of the agricultural community, really for that of the landowners. Even before the dissolution arrangements had been commenced for some combination by which the Tory Government should be displaced, and they went on more actively immediately after that event. On the 21st of July Russell had expressed his opinion that the Peelites had three courses before them—first, to stand aloof, as they had

done since Sir R. Peel's death ; second, to act in friendly concert with the Whigs, preserving their own independent position ; or third, to join the Whigs and form a fusion either with or without Cobden. The last-named course was adopted ; it was, indeed, inevitable if any strong Government was to be formed. The chief difficulty lay, not in the want of agreement between the Peelites and Whigs, but in the differences between the Whigs themselves, Lord John Russell having engaged to re-open the question of Parliamentary reform, to which Palmerston and Lansdowne were opposed.* There was throughout all the negotiations a possibility felt that Palmerston would join Derby rather than the coalition ; and Greville in his Journal, as late at the 22nd of October, 1852, says, " I have been for two days at Broadlands, where I had a good deal of talk with him (Palmerston), and I came away with the conviction that it would end in his joining the Government."

Whilst all this excitement was being manifested in official circles, the public attention was for a long time diverted from it by the passing away of one who had been looked upon as a final arbitrator when the confusion of parties endangered the stability of Governments. The Duke of Wellington died on the 14th of June, and over his grave there was the mourning of the heart of the whole nation—a nation which forgot the times when he had been in opposition to the popular will, and remembered only his enormous services, the nobility of his character, and the sincerity of his desire to serve his country.

The election of 1852 did not make any great difference in the relative strength of parties ; what change did take place was to the advantage of ministers, at the expense of the Peelites. The Government were supposed to have gained sixty-three seats, and to have lost forty ; the returns, as far as they could be depended on, showing—ministerialists, 310 ;

* These negotiations and speculations are described in the memoirs of Lord Aberdeen, privately printed, but summarized and quoted from in the *Edinburgh Review* for October, 1883. See also Greville's Journal and Martin's " Life of the Prince Consort."

opposition, 344, leaving the Government in a minority of thirty-four. There were, however, thirty-six members who were put down as neutrals, and whose votes might affect the result of a party division. The Radicals were not much affected, so far as numbers were concerned, but some additions were made of members who have since served the party in a noteworthy manner. Of these Edward Miall, who was returned for Rochdale, became the acknowledged advocate of the Nonconformists in their efforts to promote the cause of religious equality ; and Mr. (now Sir) Charles Forster, who was then first elected for Walsall, occupied a position as nearly approaching that of whip, or official representative of the party, as its loose and indefinite organization admitted.

The new Parliament met on the 4th of November, when Mr. Shaw Lefevre was re-elected Speaker ; and the preliminary business of swearing in members having been accomplished, the session was opened by the Queen on the 11th of November. With regard to the one subject of home policy which occupied the attention of the country, the royal speech was intentionally vague, conveying to the public the idea that ministers would, if they could, restore direct protection, but that they hardly hoped to do this, although they would seek to carry out the same idea of conferring special advantages upon the land-owning class in some other manner. " It gives me pleasure," the speech said, " to be enabled, by the blessing of Providence, to congratulate you on the generally improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes. If you should be of opinion that recent legislation, in contributing with other causes to this happy result, has at the same time inflicted unavoidable injury on certain important interests, I recommend you to dispassionately consider how far it may be practicable equitably to mitigate that injury, and to enable the industry of the country to meet successfully that unrestricted competition to which Parliament in its wisdom has decided that it should be subjected." The explanations of ministers were, if anything, more indefinite than the official statement of their policy ; and the Opposition, and the

Radicals especially, were determined that a speedy decision should be arrived at.

Some days were spent over the arrangements for the public funeral of the Duke of Wellington, and the expression by Parliament of the national sentiments of honour for his services and mourning for his loss. The funeral took place on the 18th of November, and on the 23rd Mr. Villiers moved a resolution which declared that the prosperity of the country was the consequence of recent legislation, "and especially of the Act of 1846, which established the free admission of foreign corn; and that that Act was a wise, just, and beneficial measure." The resolution went on to advocate the further extension of free trade, and concluded with the statement—"That this House is ready to take into its consideration any measures, consistent with the principles of these resolutions, which may be laid before it by her Majesty's ministers." The motion having been seconded by another Radical—Mr. Ewart—the Chancellor of the Exchequer rose to move an amendment, which acknowledged the duty of the Government to adhere to the policy of free trade, but omitted what he afterwards called "the three odious epithets," wise, just, and beneficial, as applied to that policy. Here the issue might have been left, but Palmerston intervened to save the feelings of the Ministry, and proposed a further amendment, which, with some alteration, was eventually carried. The debate was carried over the 25th and 26th, on which latter day the division was taken. Disraeli had withdrawn his amendment in favour of Palmerston's, but Villiers insisted upon taking a vote upon the original resolution. When the House divided, the numbers were—for Villiers' motion, 256; against it, 336. A division then took place on Palmerston's amendment, previously to which seventy-one members left the House, and it was carried by 468 votes to 53. Thus ended the long battle of protection, and the cause of free trade was substantially vindicated, although the would-be protectionist Ministry was for a short time longer left in power.

The final struggle was not long deferred. On the 3rd of

December Disraeli introduced his budget, of which the principal features were—the reduction of the malt tax and the hop duty by one-half, and of the duty on tea from two shillings and twopence farthing to one shilling, to take place gradually during a period of six years ; the alteration of the income tax, reducing the amount at which exemption was allowed ; and the increase of the house duty to one shilling and sixpence on houses, and one shilling on shops, and applying it to houses of not less than ten pounds instead of those of not less than twenty pounds a year. This was clearly a budget giving compensation to the landed interest at the cost of the industrial communities, and it was vigorously opposed. The discussion upon it began on the 10th, and lasted over four nights. On the 16th of December the Chancellor of the Exchequer replied, after which Mr. Gladstone rose to give the *coup-de-grace* to the budget and the Ministry. His speech was, as Sir Theodore Martin says, “one of those few famous displays of oratory that are reputed to have decided an issue which had before been doubtful.”* The division followed, there being—Ayes, 286; Noes, 305, a majority of nineteen against the Government whose fate it sealed.

Lord Derby immediately resigned. In his speech on the 21st of December, explaining the causes which led to his defeat, he gave his account of the relative strength of parties in the House of Commons. The adherents of the Government numbered, he said, about 310 ; the mixed Whig and Liberal party comprised about 260 ; and then there were the Irish Roman Catholics and the Peel party, which last were few in number, but strong in experience and ability. Thus the ministerialists, though stronger than any single section of the opposition, were unable to contend against them when united. They were now united not only for the purpose of defeating the Government, but also for that of forming a new Administration. The Peelites had decided not to stand aloof, and not merely to support the Whigs, but to form a fusion and take their share in the power and responsibility of government.

* “Life of Prince Consort,” chap. xlvii.

The determination was already known, and on Derby's resignation Lords Aberdeen and Lansdowne were sent for, and although Aberdeen alone waited on the Queen, he announced their joint readiness to form a Cabinet. On the 27th of December the new Premier announced in the House of Lords the formation of his Government, and the House separated for the Christmas recess, and on the 31st the House of Commons also adjourned to the 10th of February.

In Lord Aberdeen's Cabinet all the sections of the late opposition were represented, but in very unequal proportions. As Sir James Graham recorded in his journal, the Ministry consisted of seven Peelites, five Whigs, and one Radical.* There were two Radicals also in office, but not in the Cabinet, men of very different character and influence—Bernal Osborne and C. P. Villiers. The latter appointment was at once a recognition of free-trade principles, and a guarantee of their maintenance. The relations of the Radicals were not determined merely by the inadequate representation they obtained in the Ministry. There were other reasons why they were alike bound and pleased to give it a loyal support. In the then state of parties both in Parliament and in the country—using that phrase as meaning the limited constituencies which existed—the Tories could only be kept from power by a combination such as that which had been effected; and to keep the Tories out of power was the duty of all who desired any advance in Liberal politics. But there were positive, no less than negative, inducements to Liberals to support the Government. Some of its members were ready to take the lead in real—even if it were too moderate—reform, and in others there was an active growth going on which indicated an increasing sympathy with the cause of the people.

Of one of these classes Lord John Russell was a good specimen, of the other, Mr. Gladstone was the most striking

* See *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1883, p. 570. The Peelites were Aberdeen, Cranworth, Gladstone, Argyle, Newcastle, Graham, and Sidney Herbert; the Whigs were Granville, Palmerston, Russell, Wood, and Lansdowne; the Radical was Molesworth, who, although not at that time a strong man, represented many of the best traditions of the party.

example. Russell must be regarded as one of the most Liberal of the Whigs, touched, rather in method of procedure than in acceptance of principles, by the old ideas of official management and compromise. With regard to Parliamentary reform and education, both of which he was honestly desirous of promoting, he was now in much the same position which he held up to 1845 on the corn laws. He was then desirous of relieving the food of the people from the artificial restraints which made it dear; but he thought that his particular fancy of a moderate fixed duty would cheapen bread, whilst it would to some extent serve the landed interests. Now, whilst anxious to widen the basis of the franchise, he wanted to do it in some way that might rather affect the balance of parties than the solid influence of the privileged classes. Whilst his theories pointed forward, his practice lagged behind. The very opposite was the case with Mr. Gladstone, who, without hasty expressions of advanced principles, went gradually on from one practical reform to another, all in the direction of extending rights and curtailing privileges. There was enough, however, in the attitude of these and other members of the Government to warrant, on the part of the Radicals, if not a policy of entire trust, at least that attitude of friendly expectation which marked the first session of the new Parliament.

The Houses met, after the Christmas recess, on the 10th of February, 1853, when a general statement was made of the course of business which the Government proposed to pursue. The Reform Bill was not to be introduced till next session, but on the 18th, in reply to a question from Disraeli, Russell said there were two questions he wished to promote—the further education of the people, and the amendment of the representation. On the 4th of April the Education Bill was brought in. It was a halting measure, recognizing principles which it failed to carry out, and laying down broad plans and spoiling them in detail. Thus it admitted the principle of local rating, but confined it to municipal corporations; and introduced local management of the funds, but strictly limited the manner in which they should be applied. Its merit was, both in design

and in effect, rather to point out methods than to adopt them ; and so, whilst many of the Radicals gave it a nominal support, it evoked no warmth of approval, and got no further than the first reading.

The most important domestic event of the session was the budget, interesting alike from the actual proposals it contained, from the policy on which it was founded, and from the ability by which it was explained and supported by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Gladstone on this occasion stepped at once into the place which had been occupied by Sir Robert Peel in the confidence of commercial men, and of all who wished to see a financial policy which should extend freedom and aim at substantial economy. The introduction of the plan had been preceded by an attempt of the Radicals to obtain a repeal of the taxes on knowledge. On the 14th of April Milner Gibson moved three resolutions for the remission respectively of the duties on advertisements, newspaper stamps, and paper. The first, which related to the advertisement duty, was carried by 200 to 169 ; the other two were defeated by very large majorities. It was on the 18th of April that Mr. Gladstone made his statement in a speech which engaged the attention of the House for five hours. The proposals were far-reaching, but the principal points were—the continuance of the income tax and its extension to Ireland ; the entire repeal of the duty on soap ; the reduction of that on tea ; and, most remarkable of all, the extension of the legacy duty to real property, which had hitherto been exempt. It was this last proposition which pleased and encouraged the Liberals as much as it irritated the country squires, and it was greatly owing to the general feeling thus excited that a majority much larger than that which ordinarily followed the Government was secured for its financial policy.

Owing to the circumstances which have been referred to, there was little activity on the part of the Radicals in the way of special proposals for legislation. On the 3rd of May Locke King again moved for leave to bring in a bill on the county franchise ; but, looking forward to the promised introduction of

the Government measure, he withdrew his resolution without a division. On the 4th of June Berkeley pushed his resolution on the ballot further—a course which was justified by the support which it had received in previous years, and the reason thereby given why it should be pressed on the attention of Government. The division showed—Ayes, 172 ; Noes, 232, a result which was not discouraging to the reformers.

All thoughts about home improvement were, however, rapidly distracted by the shadow of a great calamity which was gathering over Europe. The quarrel between Russia and Turkey had been going on all through the year, and, step by step, our Government was being drawn towards the abyss of war. As early as April the 25th statements had been made by Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Minister, as to negotiations which were going on ; and on the 27th of May he gave further explanations, and made the declaration which was really fatal to the prospects of permanent peace—that the policy of England was to uphold the independence of the Turkish Empire. What this meant became evident when, on the 14th of June, the Czar issued a manifesto announcing his intention to occupy the Danubian provinces, and on the 2nd and 3rd of July his troops actually crossed the Pruth. This was a signal violation of the independence which we were pledged to uphold. The occupation of the provinces was declared not to be an act of war ; Russia said it was only the acquisition of a material guarantee for the performance of treaties, and England and France, anxious to secure peace, went on negotiating. Instructions were, nevertheless, sent to the English fleet to take up a position near the Dardanelles. In spite of all these proceedings, when Parliament was prorogued, the Queen's speech declared " That her Majesty has good reasons to hope that an honourable arrangement will speedily be accomplished." The hope was based on the proceedings of the Vienna Conference, by which at last a note was issued in the name of the great powers, the conditions of which were accepted by Russia, but refused by Turkey. The chance of maintaining peace rapidly disappeared. On the 5th of October Turkey declared war with

Russia ; on the 14th the combined fleets entered the Dardanelles ; and on the 1st of November Russia formally declared war. Active hostilities soon commenced. The Turkish army crossed the Danube ; on the 2nd and 3rd of November the Battle of Oltenitza was fought ; and on the 30th of November took place the fatal engagement at Sinope, in which the Turkish fleet was destroyed. Still negotiations went on, and it was not until the 27th of March that in England and France messages were delivered to the Legislatures equivalent to a declaration of war.

This war, into which, as one of her responsible ministers said, England drifted, disastrous as all war must be to the interests of domestic progress, was specially mischievous by destroying the unity of the Radical party, to whom the initiation of all effective reform was due. The division was more important as respected ability and influence than numbers. An event which separated Cobden, Bright, and Gibson from their old colleagues and companions could not but be unfortunate, especially when it was of a character to arouse strong passions and excite deep feelings. The state of opinion in the country coincided with that in the House, the bulk of the Radicals being in favour of war ; not such a war as the Government contemplated, merely with the object of preventing the dismemberment of Turkey, but for the purpose of crippling and checking the power of Russia. This overwhelming sentiment, represented in Parliament by Lord Dudley Stuart and Mr. Layard, was all but universal. To understand this, it must be remembered what part the Czar of Russia had played in putting down the popular movement which began in 1848, and in propping up despotisms and destroying liberty in all parts of Europe. Wallace very tersely describes this feeling when referring to an attempt at rebellion which marked the commencement of the reign of the Emperor Nicholas ; he says, " The incident stereotyped his character for life, and made him the sworn enemy of Liberalism, and the fanatical defender of autocracy, not only in his own country, but throughout all Europe. In European politics he saw two forces

struggling for mastery, monarchy and democracy, which were, in his opinion, identical with order and anarchy, and he was always ready to assist his brother sovereigns in putting down democratic movement." *

The war, therefore, which the Radicals in the country hoped to see commenced was one against this champion of despotism, and consequently in favour of European liberty. But there was no such feeling in the minds of the Government. They did not—at least, the majority of them did not—want to enter upon a contest at all; and at most they desired only to prevent any encroachment by Russia upon the territories of Turkey. Ministers however had a more unfortunate object—that of maintaining the integrity and independence of the Turkish Empire. In this they were aiming at an end impossible of achievement, and which, if it had been possible, would have been in reality more injurious to liberty even than the despotism of Russia. The tyranny of the Porte over its Christian subjects was worse than any oppression of continental monarchs, and the attempt to perpetuate it was most unfortunate. The power of Russia, too, was no doubt exaggerated in the popular mind. During the actual armed rebellions of 1848, it had certainly been exerted in a direct and disastrous manner; but it was an influence which could neither be appealed to nor exercised in ordinary circumstances, and the time was coming, as all men might see, when her own domestic affairs would claim all the attention and exercise all the energy of her Government.

Cobden and Bright saw clearly the side of the question which was at the time the least popular; that the influence of Russia in Europe could not be touched by fighting her in the East; that the rotten Empire of Turkey neither could nor ought to be propped up by western aid; and that to incur the horrors and the dangers of war for such objects was a crime to be resisted by all means. The three aspects of the case were put before the House of Commons on the 16th of August, immediately before the prorogation. Lord John

* Wallace's "*Russia*," vol. ii. p. 200.

Russell hoped that peace would be preserved ; Layard and Lord Dudley Stuart inveighed against Russia, and attacked the Government for their unwillingness to enter upon the conflict ; Cobden, whilst strongly disapproving of the policy of Russia, did not want to go to war, either to uphold the oppressive power of the Porte or to maintain a theoretical balance of power, declaring that Russia was not to be feared, and that Turkey could not be saved ; and Palmerston made a savage onslaught upon Cobden, averring that Turkey had the elements of life and prosperity, and that the dictum of France and England, if insisted upon with spirit, would yet be respected.

Parliament was prorogued on the 20th of August, and on the 16th of December the public were surprised by the announcement that Palmerston had resigned. What led to the resignation was never clearly explained, and in a few days it was withdrawn. This was after the terrible engagement of Sinope, which had destroyed the expectation of peace in all minds except those of some members of the Government, who seemed to hope against hope. The session of 1854 opened on the 30th of January, and ministers must still have thought that war could be prevented, for the Queen's speech contained a list of domestic subjects to be dealt with that would have demanded the undivided attention of the most industrious Parliament through the longest session. Alteration of the shipping laws ; improvement in university management ; civil service reform ; amendment of the legal administration of the poor laws ; and, above all, a measure for Parliamentary reform—a large programme this, of which a foreign war would be likely to make short work. The very proposals, however, were calculated to attract the confidence of the Radicals towards a Ministry who could admit that there was so much in the national institutions that required amendment.

Good intentions were all that the Government was fated to give to the country, but for a time there was at least the appearance of activity. On the 13th of February Lord John

brought in the promised Reform Bill. It was long and complicated, and had evidently been the result of a good deal of thought, but was certainly not worth the trouble that had been taken over it. The little good there was in it was a mere extension of the Act of 1832; the new parts were fanciful and worse than useless. Of popular extension of the suffrage there was practically none, for the borough franchise was fixed at a £6 rental, with two and a half years' residence as a qualification; and the county franchise was given to £10 occupiers, provided £5 a year at least was the *bond fide* rent of buildings apart from land. There were what Mr. Bright afterwards called "fancy franchises," in abundance. Persons receiving £100 a year salary—provided it was paid quarterly, so that a workman should not be included;—those who derived £10 a year from stock or dividends; all who paid forty shillings a year to assessed taxes, income tax, or licence duty, or who had £50 in a saving-bank of three years' standing, were to have borough or county votes. The tens and the hundreds were carefully looked after, but the thousands and the millions were as carefully excluded. And lest, after all, the really popular constituencies should obtain too much power, there was for the first time the miserable proposal of a minority clause—that refuge of the half-hearted who, pretending to trust the people, have no true confidence in them; who try to evade the national will which they dare not openly contest; and who make of national politics a game of shuffling intrigue instead of an honest dependence upon democratic principles. The disfranchisement clauses were like an appendix to the great Reform Bill, except that the seats taken from small boroughs were to be given principally to counties. The thing, however, was important only as showing how little of the popular element there was in the Whig idea of reform, for on the 11th of April the measure, which had of course excited no enthusiasm anywhere, was formally withdrawn.

In the intervals of discussion on the Eastern question, the Radicals made various efforts to advance some of the subjects

in which the people were interested. On the 14th of February Locke King moved for leave to bring in a bill to amend the law of succession to real property, that is to abolish the system of primogeniture. Leave was given, and on the 8th of March the second reading was proposed, and was defeated by 203 to 82.* The desire to make some kind of progress with the question of national education led to a proposal for an experiment to be made in one town of a system of rate-supported and locally managed schools, and this was the object of the Manchester and Salford Education Bill. It came before the House on the 21st of February; but Milner Gibson moved—“That education to be supported by public rates is a subject which ought not to be dealt with by any private bill,” and this being carried put an end to the scheme. Sir William Clay

* The division was the first occasion of showing the strength of the Radical party in this Parliament, and proves that under better conditions it might have exercised an important influence in Parliament. The following were the Ayes :—

Adair, H. E.	Ferguson, J.	Pellatt, A.
Alcock, T.	Goderich, Visct.	Phinn, T.
Anderson, Sir J.	Goodman, Sir G.	Pilkington, J.
Barnes, T.	Greene, J.	Potter, R.
Bass, M. T.	Gregson, S.	Power, N.
Bell, J.	Hadfield, G.	Ricardo, J. L.
Biggs, W.	Hall, Sir B.	Richardson, J. T.
Bouverie, Hon. E. P.	Hastie, A.	Robartes, T.
Brady, J.	Heywood, J.	Roebuck, J. A.
Brotherton, J.	Heyworth, L.	Scholefield, W.
Butler, C. S.	Hitchin, E. J.	Scobell, Captain
Challis, Ald.	Hutt, W.	Scully, F.
Chambers, M.	Kennedy, T.	Sculley, V.
Cobden, R.	Kershaw, J.	Shafto, R. D.
Cowan, C.	Langton, H. G.	Shelley, Sir J. V.
Crawford, S.	Laslett, W.	Smith, J. B.
Crossley, F.	Lee, W.	Strickland, Sir G.
Devereux, J. T.	Lucas, F.	Thicknesse, R. A.
Duffy, C. G.	McGavin, J.	Thompson, G.
Duncan, G.	Maguire, J. F.	Thornley, T.
Duncombe, T.	Massey, W. N.	Walmsley, Sir J.
Dunlop, A. M.	Miall, E.	Wilkinson, W. A.
Evans, Sir De L.	Milnes, R. M.	Willcox, B. M.
Fagan, W.	Mitchell, T. A.	Williams, W.
Fielden, M. J.	Moffatt, G.	
Fergus, J.	Morris, D.	King, J. L. } <i>Tellers.</i>
Fitzgerald, J. D.	Murragh, J. S.	Bright, J. }
Forster, C.	O'Connell, J.	
Fox, W. J.	Pechell, Sir G. B.	

resumed his effort on behalf of religious liberty, by again bringing in a bill for the abolition of church rates. Leave was given on the 23rd of May, by 129 to 62; but the second reading, moved on the 21st of June, was lost by 209 to 182. The ballot again secured a good division. Introduced by Berkeley on the 13th of June, it was lost by only a small majority, the numbers being 157 for, and 194 against.

Long before this the fatal step had been taken which involved the country in the horrors of war. It had been undertaken by some at least of the ministers with a spirit quite unsuited to so solemn a responsibility. At a dinner given to Sir C. Napier, who, in anticipation of the commencement of hostilities, was sent to the Baltic with the English fleet, the speeches were more fitted for the opening of festivities than for the beginning of war. Against this manifestation of levity Mr. Bright protested in the course of a discussion on the 13th of March, to whom Palmerston replied in terms studiously offensive, beginning by addressing his critic as the "hon. and reverend gentleman." On being rebuked by Cobden for this unseemly jest, he said, "Any opinion he (Mr. Bright) may entertain of me personally or of my conduct private or political, is to me a matter of the most perfect indifference." There could not be much desire for peace under such coarse manifestations of levity. It is to the honour of Lord Aberdeen and some of his immediate friends that they did not share in this indifference to the horrors of war, and did all they could to avoid them. "Fate hurried onward fast," however, and on the 27th of March a message was sent from the Queen to Parliament, which was virtually a declaration of war. The address in reply was agreed to the next day without a division, but after an eloquent protest from Mr. Bright. After this all thoughts were directed to the one subject, and nothing of importance took place, until on the 12th of August Parliament was prorogued.

The war had been carried on, giving proof once more of the valour of English soldiers. Alma and Balaclava and Inkerman had been fought, and the men who had carried themselves

like heroes in these engagements were dying in the trenches without medical stores, almost without food, and entirely without proper clothing or provisions for shelter. Such a winter as was passed by our troops in those fatal trenches has not often been heard of. The accounts came over to this country slowly, and when the winter session was opened on the 12th of December, the excitement on the subject was only commencing. The time before Christmas was occupied in passing votes of thanks to our own forces and to the French commanders, and in enacting a Foreigners' Enlistment Bill to raise a force of not exceeding 15,000 foreigners to be drilled in this country. On the 23rd the House adjourned for the Christmas holidays.

Before Parliament met again, the bad news from the Crimea had become known, and "the public sympathy and indignation were roused to the utmost by the conviction that the soldiers of the finest army Great Britain had ever sent forth were ingloriously perishing of disease, overtasked, and underfed, from the absence of the most ordinary calculation and foresight." * On the 23rd of January, 1855, when Parliament again assembled, the popular feeling found expression in notices of motion given in both Houses, the most important one being that by Roebuck, for a select committee to inquire into the administration of the war. This, which would have been formidable in any case, was rendered doubly so now by the action of the leader of the House of Commons. On the 25th January, when Roebuck's motion was to be discussed, Lord John rose and announced his resignation, which he had tendered because he did not see on what grounds the proposed inquiry could be resisted ; but, as it impugned the conduct of some of his colleagues, if he could not oppose it on their behalf, he was bound to resign. If there had been any doubt before as to the result of the decision on the motion, it was now at an end ; the resolution was accepted as a vote of want of confidence in the Government, and there was only the remnant of a Government left to confide in. On the 26th Roebuck

* "Annual Register," 1855, p. 2.

moved for the special committee. He was unable from ill health to make his speech; but no speaking was really required. The nation demanded an inquiry, and it had to be undertaken. The debate was adjourned to the 29th, when, on a division, the resolution was carried by 305 to 148, and Lord Aberdeen's Ministry ceased to exist.

Whatever other result the war was to accomplish, it had now destroyed an English Ministry, one which contained Liberal elements, and which might have been mildly progressive in its domestic policy if the foreign catastrophe had not occurred. Mild, however, its progress must inevitably have been. A coalition is not likely to originate and carry a thorough scheme of reform of any kind. There are so many interests to be conciliated, so many opinions to qualify the original proposition, that a simple and definite plan has no chance of adoption. That Russell was genuinely desirous to effect improvements is certain now, and was felt at the time; but his processes, even if he had not been hampered by unwilling colleagues, were always tentative and timorous. Mr. Gladstone, as we have since learnt, was growing in that substantial Liberalism which is not afraid to apply great principles when they have once been accepted; but at that time his attention was mainly directed to reforms in the financial department, to which he was invited by his official duties, and the Radicals had not yet found in him a hearty friend, much less a great leader. The Aberdeen Ministry neither promised great reforms itself nor prepared the way for a more adventurous Administration. It existed because there was no strong party in Parliament, and the causes which created it were to exercise for some time longer the deadening influence which, like the frost of winter, was destined to precede the stronger birth of a new and vigorous spring.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE RESIGNATION OF LORD ABERDEEN IN 1855 TO
THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT IN 1859.

WHEN Aberdeen resigned, application was made first to Derby, as leader of the formal opposition, and then to Russell, whose secession had been the means of destroying the unity of the late Cabinet. On the failure of both these statesmen, Palmerston was asked by the Queen, and strongly advised by Lansdowne, to persevere in the formation of a Ministry. The new Government was still somewhat composite in character—Mr. Gladstone, Graham, and Sidney Herbert retaining office ; Aberdeen, Russell, and Newcastle retiring. This first accession to power of Lord Palmerston marked the beginning of a long period not of reaction, but of stagnation in domestic policy. By degrees the Conservatives and the Whigs, without entering into a coalition, formed a working combination, which left office in the hands of Palmerston and power in those of the old governing classes. What the position of the new Premier was with respect to home policy may be ascertained from the fact that, during his attempt to form an administration, Derby had applied to Palmerston to join him, and Derby said, “ I found that, with regard to any personal considerations, he could have no objection to act in a Government with which I was connected. We went so far as to discuss the particular position in the Government in which the noble viscount should be placed.” *

For the time, however, the public mind was fixed not on domestic, but on foreign affairs ; the war with Russia and its

* Lord Derby's speech in the House of Lords on the 8th of February, 1855.

probable consequences were absorbing all attention. The people in the country, and the Radicals who directly represented them in Parliament, had already begun to see that the object which induced them to support the war—the reduction of the power and influence of Russia in Europe—was not the end which the Government had in view. To prop up the decaying empire of the Turk was the ultimately impossible task which the English Cabinet had set before itself. There was, however, a general opinion that, of all the ministers, Palmerston was the one who shared with the people the desire to promote the cause of Liberalism abroad, and to promote it by weakening, if not humiliating, Russia. There was thus, for a time, the curious spectacle of the least Liberal of the Whigs receiving Radical support at the expense of some of his colleagues, who were genuinely in favour of domestic reform. It is one of the curses of war that it distorts the national view not only of events, but of men. The minister, who was thus welcomed to office, deliberately and of set purpose prevented any political advance, and for years restrained the desire for those constitutional changes which were the indispensable precursors of social progress. The key-note of his policy was struck when, on the 16th of February, the Prime Minister announced what was to be the future conduct of his Government. Of domestic concerns, he referred only to the questions of administrative reforms, which had been raised in so serious a manner by the vote in favour of Roebuck's motion for a committee of inquiry. Palmerston offered that, if the committee were abandoned, its functions should be undertaken by the Cabinet, which had already instituted the preliminary provisions not only for inquiry, but for actual reform. He would honestly endeavour to obtain peace, and had induced Lord John Russell to proceed to Vienna as the English representative at a congress, to show the importance attached to the negotiations and the sincerity of our desire for their success.

Whilst the country was thus disturbed by the conduct of the war and the instability of governments, there passed from

its service one of the most devoted, most indefatigable, and most honourable men who have, in modern times, represented the cause of liberty and progress in Parliament. Joseph Hume died on the 20th of February, at the age of seventy-eight. It would be much easier to forget many of the services which he rendered to the nation than to overrate the work which he actually accomplished. He was amongst the earliest and ablest advocates of free trade ; always an earnest friend of national education ; and the acknowledged champion of the cause of Parliamentary reform. Wherever liberty was restricted, either by test acts which touched the conscience or by combination laws which affected the industrial rights of the people, Hume stood forward to remove the obstruction. He was one of the first of the statesmen who advocated large and liberal principles in the government of the colonies, and was throughout his life a strenuous supporter of a policy of justice and conciliation towards Ireland. He carried, almost single-handed, the repeal of the old combination laws, of the prohibition of the export of machinery, and of the Act for preventing workmen from going abroad. In a like manner, almost alone, he exposed and defeated that monstrous Orange conspiracy, which, although it is now nearly forgotten, was at the time a dangerous attempt—headed by the second heir to the throne and the commander of the national army—to effect by force a change in the government of the country, to repeal the great popular reform accomplished in 1832, and to restore to the aristocracy the power of which that great Act had deprived them. In later times, his especial devotion to the principles, and his insistence upon the details, of financial reform had overshadowed the memory of his more general services ; but, as a public writer * said on the occasion of his death, “ It would be wrong to suppose that Mr. Hume’s mind was contracted to the effecting mere pecuniary savings, although the mountain of abuses he had to destroy rendered necessary an incessant application to the task. He was a reformer of a higher order, quite capable of appreciating the

* *Morning Chronicle* quoted in “ *Annual Register*,” 1855, p. 254.

influence of public honesty and morality on the national character, and desirous to elevate by education the standard of national intelligence."

Not long before his death, Hume had received a sort of official recognition of the public gratitude by being called to the Privy Council ; but it was at once a loss to the nation and a disgrace to its political system, that such a man should not have been chosen to take part, as a responsible minister, in the practical administration of the government which he did so much to purify, and in carrying out the reforms which he originated. He had ability, experience, and industry ; but he had neither a connection with the governing class nor a subservience to their privileges and interests, without one or other of which, in the then state of the representation, independence in office was impossible ; and Hume was a man who, like Cobden, would decline any nominal power which involved the inability to actively press forward the reforms to which he was devoted. His work was not the less of national importance. As regarded the Radical party in Parliament, his great service was that he kept constantly before it not only occasions for protests on behalf of its broad principles, but opportunities for making advances towards them by reforms in detail in every administrative department.

Palmerston's first Cabinet, which had been formed after such long deliberation, went speedily to pieces. The Premier had strongly opposed the appointment of Roebuck's committee, and the Peelites who consented to remain in office did so with the belief that he would resist its final acceptance. There was no definite engagement on the matter, and Palmerston did not chose to risk his popularity by resolutely refusing to go on with the Government if the committee were elected. He declared his own opinion, and asked the House to reconsider its decision, but did not attempt to make it a matter of confidence. His own character as an administrator was not touched by the inquiry, and if Parliament were disposed to insist, he was prepared to run the risk to the public service which he thought that such a public investigation would involve.

Graham, Gladstone, Herbert, and Cardwell, were in a different position. They were bound both by inclination and by honour to defend the character of their friend and late chief, Lord Aberdeen, and the vote for a committee directly impugned his ability, if not his political honesty. To take office, in the face of a national emergency, under a Premier who had succeeded him, was possible to them ; but to consent to what was virtually a continuance of a vote of censure was quite another matter, and they resolved to resign, the announcement being made on the 23rd of February.

It was indicative of the peculiar state of parties that secessions of such importance did not for a moment shake the stability of the Ministry. Had there been any question of political principle involved in the arrangements or in the thought of Parliament, such a transaction could not have taken place. It suited the views of the Prime Minister to consider his Government merely as an administrative machine ; he neither desired nor intended to raise any constitutional issue, and a change in the details of the machinery was therefore not a matter of supreme importance. Equally significant was the way in which the vacancies were filled up and the Cabinet completed. In appearance the Ministry was made more homogeneous, all the new members being Whigs, and there was no character of coalition left. In reality the Government was not made more Liberal in itself, and it was more at the mercy of one or other section of the Opposition.

The most peculiar point was the acceptance of office by Lord John Russell, who now took a place under the man whom but a short time before he had dismissed from his own administration for insubordination. That was a personal matter only, and no one would have thought the worse of Russell for sinking considerations of his individual dignity in the desire to serve the country in a time of difficulty. But Russell, who had previously made his alliance with Aberdeen conditional on Parliamentary reform being adopted as a Cabinet question, now accepted as his chief the man who was a well-known opponent of reform. The old characteristic

of Whig rule was thus revived, the Ministry being in form willing to adopt administrative and social improvements providing they were to decide, without any more direct appeal to the people, in what direction and to what extent changes were to be made. There was this difference, however, between the position of the present Whigs and that of their predecessors in the last century—that the House of Lords was under the influence of the Tory party, and no reform could be accomplished except under the fear of that very appeal to the people to which Palmerston openly objected.

The confusion was not confined to the Whig and Tory parties; the Radicals had not recovered from the divisions occasioned by the outbreak of the war. Yet they had changed their relative positions towards the Ministry. In the debate which followed the statements of Graham and Mr. Gladstone on the 23rd of February, Mr. Layard made a vehement attack upon Palmerston, partly because of the narrow basis on which his Ministry was formed, but mainly on account of the absence of any probability that under the new Government the objects of the war would be widened so as to affect the cause of Liberalism in Europe. Mr. Bright, on the other hand, promised his support to Palmerston, with the understanding that the basis of the current negotiations should not be altered, and that peace should be obtained as early as possible. There was no opportunity, under such circumstances, for any effective work being done by the Radicals; yet during the session they made some not unimportant demonstrations of strength. There was at the outset a practical triumph for the party, in the decision of the Government to accept one part at least of the proposals urged by Milner Gibson on behalf of the freedom of the press. The compulsory stamp upon newspapers was abolished, an act which led at once to an increase of the means of thoughtful discussion of public affairs, the value of which soon became manifest. The formal proposition was made on the 19th of March, and the resolution agreed to.

On the subject of Parliamentary reform, the only effort

made was Berkeley's annual motion for the ballot, which was introduced on the 22nd of May, and defeated by 218 to 166—a division which, under the circumstances, was not discouraging. Still better votes were obtained by Sir W. Clay on the church rates question, a fact which proved the growing importance and influence of the Nonconformists. On the 29th of March Clay moved for leave to bring in a bill to abolish those rates, and obtained it by 155 to 76. The second reading was carried on the 16th of May in a more triumphant manner, the votes being 217 for, and 198 against. As the leaders of all sections of the official Liberals, Palmerston, Russell, and Gladstone, voted against the bill, the protest in favour of religious liberty was all the more remarkable. The measure, of course, came to nothing—it never could have passed the Lords ; and on the 25th of July, as no progress could be made, Clay moved that the order for going into committee should be discharged. National education was kept before the attention of the country, not only by discussions upon the estimates, but by the introduction of a Free Schools Bill by Milner Gibson, for which leave was given on the 29th of March. On the 20th of March Sir Joshua Walmsley had moved unsuccessfully that the British Museum and the National Gallery should be opened on Sundays.

The subject, however, which excited the most general interest was what was called *administrative reform*, which included the method of appointment to all departments of the public service. The disgraceful break-down of the services in the Crimea had first aroused attention to the matter, and it had been sustained by the discussions attending the appointment of Roebuck's committee. Mr. Layard constituted himself a sort of champion of the cause, and on the 15th of June he brought forward a very remarkable resolution, which declared—“ That this House views with deep and increasing concern the state of the nation, and is of opinion that the manner in which merit and efficiency have been sacrificed in public appointments to party and family influences, and to a blind adherence to routine, has given rise to great misfortunes, and

threatens to bring discredit upon the national character and to involve the country in grave disasters." To this resolution Sir Bulwer Lytton moved the following amendment:—"That this House recommends to the earliest attention of her Majesty's ministers the necessity of a careful revision of our various official establishments, with a view to simplify and facilitate the transaction of public business, and, by instituting judicial tests of merit, as well as by removing obstructions to its fair promotion and legitimate rewards, to secure to the service of the State the largest available proportion of the energy and intelligence for which the people of this country are distinguished." Two nights' debate took place, and on the 18th of June Layard's resolution was lost by 359 to 46.* The consideration of Lytton's amendment was adjourned to the 21st of June, when it was carried. A milder resolution than that of Layard on the same subject of administrative reform was, on the 10th of July, introduced by Vincent Scully, and was defeated only by 140 to 125, a proof that the matter was pressing itself on the consideration of Parliament.

Before the session closed, there was to be another striking scene of ministerial disunion. The war had been carried on in the Crimea with enormous losses of life on all sides. The conference at Vienna had been attended by Lord John Russell as the English representative. That amiable but too self-

* The following formed the minority, which is almost entirely Radical:—

Alexander, J.	Langton, H. G.	Reed, J. H.
Bell, J.	Laslett, W.	Roebuck, J. A.
Bower, G.	Lee, W.	Scholefield, W.
Brockman, E. D.	Lindsay, W. S.	Scobell, Capt.
Brown, H.	Lowe, R.	Scully, V.
Cobden, R.	Maguire, J. F.	Smith, J. B.
Dillwyn, L. L.	Mangles, R. D.	Thompson, G.
Dundas, G.	Miall, E.	Tite, W.
Dunlop, A. M.	Michell, W.	Vance, G.
Fitzgerald, W. R. S.	Mowatt, F.	Warner, E.
Fox, W. J.	Murrough, J. P.	Williams, W.
Goderich, Visct.	Oliveira, R.	Wise, A.
Greaves, E.	Otway, A. J.	
Grogan, E.	Parker, R. T.	Layard, A. H. }
Hadfield, G.	Pechell, Sir G. B.	Clifford, H. M. }
Keating, H. S.	Pellatt, A.	} <i>Tellers.</i>
King, Hon. P. J. L.	Price, W. P.	

reliant statesman had undertaken a duty for the performance of which he was not qualified. He had, no doubt, heard it laid down in the English Cabinet that Russia was not to be driven to extremes, and that some method of saving her honour would be accepted in the final negotiations. This sentiment his lordship ventured to express in public, which might have been all very well if his Government were prepared to back him up in the declaration. In the same way, when certain propositions submitted to Russia were met by explanation and modification, Russell said that in his opinion the suggested change ought to be accepted, but here again his Government did not agree with him. They were bound to the Emperor of the French, who declined to accept the Russian proposals. So the negotiations came to nothing, and Russell, on his return, immediately resigned the seat in the Cabinet, which he had so recently accepted, and an influence, certainly Liberal, if not very thorough, was withdrawn from the Ministry. Immediately after this, on the 17th of July, Roebuck moved, as the result of the inquiries of his committee, a resolution declaring that the calamities in the Crimea were due mainly to the conduct of the Administration, and that the House “do visit with severe reprehension every member of that Cabinet.” This vote of censure, which included the Prime Minister and most of his colleagues, was lost by 289 to 182, the division being taken on the 19th of July. On the 14th of August Parliament was prorogued.

When Parliament met on the 31st of January, 1856, the Queen was able to congratulate members on the fall of Sebastopol, and on the settlement of preliminaries on which negotiations for peace might be carried on. The death of Emperor Nicholas, which took place on the 2nd of March, 1855, had made it more practicable to treat with Russia on the basis of concessions to be made by her after a great military reverse. The young Emperor was, neither by wishes nor honour, bound to continue the contest to the extent to which his father was. Arrangements had been made, therefore, for a conference to take place in Paris, at which it was almost

certain that peace would be definitely secured. Attention might therefore be directed once more to domestic affairs, and if there had been any desire on the part of the Ministry to promote effectual reforms, the fact would have been properly referred to in the Queen's speech. That there was no such desire was proved not by the omission of the subject altogether, but by the terms in which it was treated. "There are many subjects connected with internal improvement," the speech said, "which I recommend to your attentive consideration ;" but when these "many subjects " came to be recited, they resolved themselves into three only as worthy of particular mention. The commercial code of Scotland was to be assimilated to that of England ; the law of partnership was to be amended ; and a change was to be made in the local dues and passing tolls to which merchant shipping was liable.

Little was done before the Easter recess except to debate matters connected with the war, and to look forward anxiously for the conclusion of peace. On the 3rd of March Palmerston announced that the preliminaries of peace had been signed "one day last week." When the Houses met after the holiday, on the 31st of March, they were informed that on the previous day at two o'clock a treaty of peace was signed at Paris. The terms of the treaty did not thoroughly satisfy any English party. Those who wished for the power of Russia to be checked and her influence in Europe to be decreased, received some gratification. The great military empire had suffered a defeat ; her territory was curtailed to form a part of the new Roumanian province ; and she was debarred from constructing an armed fleet in the Black Sea. Both these provisions were subsequently reversed, but that she strove afterwards for their withdrawal was a proof that at the time they were tokens of humiliation. The one object about which the Government had talked—the maintenance of the integrity and independence of Turkey—was treated in a very strange fashion, the Provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia, for the defence of which the war had arisen, being separated from the Empire and constructed into what was practically a separate nation. In con-

senting to this course, ministers adopted, almost unconsciously, the only method by which the Ottoman Empire can be gradually broken up without European complications of the most dangerous kind. To perpetuate the Turkish despotism over its Christian subjects would be infamous, if it were possible. To build up independent states, like Roumania, Servia, and Montenegro, having national sentiments and national objects, is the way to emancipate the oppressed subjects of the Porte without leading to the acquirement, by any one western power, of influence and authority which would be regarded as dangerous by the others.

With the close of the war attention could be once more directed to domestic reforms, and the question that was first pressed forward was that of national education. On the 6th of March Lord John Russell introduced a series of twelve resolutions which touched on almost every branch of the subject, although they everywhere stopped short of the thorough recognition of principles. The resolutions proposed—(1) To extend and revise the minutes of the Privy Council ; (2) to increase the number of inspectors ; (3) to appoint sub-inspectors of Dissenting and Catholic schools ; (4) on report of inspectors to form school districts ; (5) to enable sub-inspectors to report on deficiency of education ; (6) to enlarge the powers of the charity commissioners to devote endowments to educational purposes ; (7) to enable ratepayers, in districts where there was a deficiency, to rate themselves ; (8) to enable, under certain circumstances, quarter sessions to impose school rates : (9) to provide for election of school committees by ratepayers ; (10) to regulate religious instruction in rate schools ; (11) to enact that employers should furnish certificates of attendance and pay for instruction ; (12) to encourage education by prizes and by diminution of school fees. This scheme, it will be seen, was far-reaching, but it did not secure the support of any party. The Radicals were divided, Gibson and Roebuck speaking in favour of secular education, and Miall and Hadfield opposing all State interference. Receiving no general encouragement, Lord John withdrew the resolutions,

and moved and carried a motion that on the 10th of April the House would resolve itself into a committee to consider the question. On the day appointed the House went into committee, when Russell moved—"That in the opinion of this committee it is expedient to revise and consolidate the minutes of the Committee of Privy Council on Education," but was defeated by 260 votes to 158. An advance was, however, made during the session by the appointment of a vice-president of the Committee of Council on Education, who should be a minister having special charge of the subject.

The greatest activity was shown by the Radicals with regard to religious liberty. Sir W. Clay again introduced his bill to abolish church rates, and once more obtained large majorities in his favour. This year, too, he succeeded in securing the votes of ministers. The second reading, which took place on the 5th of March, was carried by 221 to 178—Palmerston, Sir G. C. Lewis, and Sir C. Wood being in the majority, and Russell and Gladstone in the minority. The bill was withdrawn on the 27th of June. A more striking proposal was made by Miall on the 27th of May, when he moved to disendow the Irish Church, and to discontinue the *Regum Donum* to Nonconformists in Ireland, saving in both cases all existing life-interests. For this thorough-going resolution he obtained 93 votes, whilst 163 were recorded against it. The division showed that there existed in Parliament a very strong feeling in favour of relieving the Irish people from the dominance of an alien Church.

On the 20th of May Berkeley moved for leave to introduce a bill for the adoption of the ballot, but was defeated by 151 to 111. An attempt was made by the Ministry to introduce a reform of the House of Lords in a manner which if it would not have been very effective at the time, yet would have settled a principle which might by degrees produce something like an approach to sympathy of feeling between the two Houses, instead of the direct antagonism which now exists whenever there is a Liberal majority in the Commons. The appointment of Lord Wensleydale as a life peer would have

been a precedent fruitful of results, and it was exactly on this ground that it was successfully resisted by the majority in the House of Lords. On the 22nd of February, the House being in committee of privilege, Lyndhurst moved that, the committee having examined the letters patent purporting to create the Rt. Hon. Sir James Parke, Knight, a baron of the United Kingdom for life, reported it as their opinion that neither the letters patent nor the writ of summons issued in pursuance thereof can entitle the grantee therein named to sit and vote in Parliament; and this was carried, an amendment being defeated by ninety-two to fifty-seven. That the resolution was an interference with the royal prerogative was hardly denied, but the Peers were for the time masters of the situation. The reform of their House will have to be accomplished in a more direct and more thorough manner.

At the close of the session, on the 25th of July, Disraeli reviewed its history for the purpose of showing how great and repeated had been the failure of the Government to carry their measures. In the course of his speech he made a declaration of the principles of his party, which, in the light of subsequent events, is sufficiently interesting. He held that to be a Conservative principle which regards the Parliamentary settlement of 1832 as a satisfactory settlement; that to be a Conservative principle that in any representative scheme the influence of landed property ought to be sensibly felt; that would be a Conservative principle which would maintain the supremacy of the English and Irish Churches. Some of his statements of principle were received with ironical cheers by the Liberals; but he turned the tables upon them when, in conclusion, he said that the Government was really pursuing a Conservative policy, and that although this would be better done by Conservatives, he called on his friends to take heart, since the Liberal party could not long exist, when its chief and selected men were in power and continued to hold office, not only without carrying Liberal principles into effect, but without even frankly avowing their profession. There were Radicals listening to this attack who could not deny some of

its charges, but Palmerston treated the matter in his own jaunty style. The session was closed on the 29th of July.

Another foreign subject was preparing to distract attention, to confuse political issues and break up parties. On the 8th of October the lorcha *Arrow* was seized by the Chinese authorities in the river at Canton. The vessel was said by her owners to have been under the protection of an English register, to have been commanded by an English officer, and to have flown the English flag. The last assertion seems to have been proved, although the flag was displayed without any legal authority. The register, if it had ever been in force, had expired some time before, and when the seizure was made all the persons on board were Chinese, one of them being a notorious pirate. It was on these grounds, which, if the acting power had been a European state, would scarcely have led to a formal inquiry, that a war was speedily commenced. The hollowness of the pretence was soon afterwards admitted by a change of object, which, instead of being confined to a demand for apology and compensation for the seizure of the *Arrow*, was made to extend to a right of entry into Canton. "English interests" were made to take the place not only of consideration for a comparatively weak nation, but of common justice to an antagonist.

When Parliament met on the 3rd of February, 1857, the Queen's speech referred to the commencement of hostilities with China, and to the success which had so far attended our operations. But for such an interference it was soon seen that the Radicals were prepared for an active political campaign. On the 12th of February Clay again introduced his bill for abolishing church rates, and it was read a first time. On the 19th of the same month Locke King moved for leave to bring in a bill for extending the county franchise, and was defeated only by the narrow majority of thirteen—the numbers being 179 for, and 192 against. On this occasion Russell voted for the bill, which was opposed by Palmerston and the other ministers. Another demonstration in favour of Parliamentary reform was made on the 24th of February, by

Sir J. Walmsley, who moved for a committee to consider the representative system and report upon means for "extending to the unenfranchised that share of political power to which they may be justly entitled." The support of this proposal was not general even with the Radicals, for Duncombe opposed it on the ground of its uselessness, and on a division it was lost by 190 to 73.

The relative strength of Liberals and Conservatives in the House of Commons, when both acted strictly on party lines, was fairly indicated by a vote which took place on the 23rd of February. On that day Disraeli moved an amendment to the budget, and was defeated by a majority of eighty. Three days afterwards, on the 26th of February, the Ministry were overthrown by a majority of sixteen. This was on a resolution moved by Cobden on the Chinese question, which stated, "This House considers that the papers which have been laid upon the table fail to establish satisfactory grounds for the violent measures resorted to at Canton, in the late affair of the *Arrow*." In favour of this resolution there was a union of Radicals, Peelites, and Conservatives, and it was carried by 263 to 247. Cobden and Milner Gibson were the tellers, and the motion was on their part a vindication of the principles of justice and honour in dealing with weaker states. They were followed by the bulk of the Radicals, amongst them being Fox, Goderich, Hadfield, Locke King, Layard, and Roebuck; but there were some well-known members against, of whom Sir W. Clay, Cobbett, Villiers, and Scholefield were conspicuous. For the time it seemed that this victory was fatal to the interests of the party, and there was certainly a strong feeling in the constituencies which resented their action; but a calmer review of the facts has convinced the people of the country that no better service could be rendered to them than to uphold the cause of justice against the selfish feelings of the hour. The reverses which followed were soon made good, and the character of the men who suffered for a time has been permanently raised by the transaction. On the 5th of March Palmerston announced that, in consequence of the vote of the

26th of February, he had decided to appeal to the country ; and, some formal business having been transacted, Parliament was, on the 21st of March, prorogued and dissolved.

The result of the general election which followed was a great triumph for Palmerston. His opponents were routed in all directions, and he was supposed to be insured a long period of office.* The Radical leaders especially suffered, amongst those who were defeated at the polls being Cobden, Bright, Milner Gibson, W. J. Fox, Wilkinson, Walmsley, Layard, and Vincent Scully. The repulse was only temporary ; before the end of the year Bright and Milner Gibson were both returned, the latter for Ashton, and the former in a most honourable manner for Birmingham. Cobden was elected in 1859 for Rochdale, and other members found seats at different times. If the leaders of the party suffered, however, there was no suggestion that their general principles were condemned by the country. On the contrary, the growth which we have seen taking place in the Liberal ranks was quite as distinctly manifested now as at any former time. That the Radicals were an important section of his party was recognized by Palmerston, who was shrewd enough to know their power and to endeavour to retain it in his service.

The new Parliament met on the 30th of April, and the preliminary business of swearing in members and electing a Speaker being gone through, the session was formally opened on the 7th of May. The address in reply to the speech was carried without a division. In the course of the debate Palmerston, referring to the question of Parliamentary reform, said that there was no time during that session to deal with it, but that between then and the next session the Government would consider it, with a view to introduce a practical measure. This, coming from the old opponent of reform, was a proof of the position which the subject held in the opinions of a large number of Liberals. It had, however, the effect—no doubt, anticipated by the astute Premier—of postponing all attempts

* The party strength in the new Parliament, as given in "McCalmont's Poll Book," was—Liberals, 366 ; Conservatives, 287, showing a Liberal majority of seventy-nine.

at immediate action. Thus, on the 10th of June, leave was refused to Locke King to bring in a bill on the county franchise, by 204 to 145 ; and Berkeley's motion on the ballot, on the 30th of June, met with a similar fate, being rejected by 257 to 189.

Parliament was prorogued on the 28th of August, but before that time news had arrived of a great national calamity, which for another period—fortunately a short one—again distracted attention from domestic affairs. The Indian Mutiny broke out into open action on the 10th of May at Meerut, whence, spreading to Delhi, it assumed the proportions of a fearful rebellion. Soon the news reached home, and Government and people became aware that they were engaged in a life and death struggle for the maintenance of the Indian Empire. The men on whom the fortunes of England depended proved themselves worthy of the mighty trust. There had been momentary hesitation and indecision of counsel at Meerut ; but when the real danger was recognized there was no more weakness. Lawrence, Edwards, and Nicholson ; Havelock, Rose, Outram, and Campbell ;—these, and colleagues worthy of their companionship, upheld the fortunes of their country and restored its supremacy. On the 21st of September Delhi was recaptured ; on the 16th of November Lucknow was finally relieved, and the back of the rebellion was broken. When Parliament met on the 8th of December, the Queen was able to speak hopefully of the prospect of restoring order and peace in India.

The winter session had been called on account of the commercial and financial crisis, and the consequent suspension by the Government of the Bank Charter Act, for which an indemnity by Parliament was necessary. The speech from the throne, however, referred to the general business of the session, and, amongst other things, promised the introduction of a measure on Parliamentary reform in redemption of the pledge given by the Premier in May. On the 12th of December, when the special financial business had been transacted, an adjournment took place.

The Houses reassembled on the 4th of February, 1858, and it was not long before a catastrophe, striking both from its character and the means by which it was brought about, fell upon the strong Government of Lord Palmerston. The noble lord had always posed as the special defender of Liberalism in Europe, and the great champion of English honour and dignity. He had more than once reproached some of the Radicals with being ready to accept humiliation for the sake of peace. He was now to appear as a minister ready to limit the right of asylum in England, and willing to alter the laws of this country, at the dictation of a foreign despot and his military supporters. To make the transaction still more dramatic, he was to be rebuked and punished at the instigation of some of the very men whom he had been in the habit of accusing of cowardice or unpatriotic folly.

The attempt on the life of the French Emperor, made by Orsini and others on the 14th of January, had been arranged, and the bombs made use of had been prepared, in this country. This gave rise to some absurd and threatening declarations by certain colonels and other officers in the French army, who, amongst other wild words, talked of their "indignation and wrath against those who become the accomplices of those sanguinary anarchists, by giving them an asylum ;" and, alluding to this country, said, in an address to the Emperor, "If your Majesty wants soldiers to get at these men, even in the recesses of their den, we humbly beseech you to choose the 82nd Regiment as part of the advanced guard of that army." * This sort of language was only made important because it was officially inserted in the Government paper. The colonels could not be expected to know much about international law or the modes of communication between governments ; but a more serious matter was a request for an alteration in the English law, conveyed in a despatch from Count Walweski on the 20th of January. To this no distinct or written refusal was given, but on the 8th of February Lord Palmerston moved for

* "Annual Register," 1858, p. 221.

leave to bring in a bill to alter the laws relating to conspiracy to murder. Notice of some such bill had been given in the preceding session, but its introduction now had all the appearance of being the consequence of the application of a foreign power, accompanied by threats and menaces officially promulgated. Palmerston, therefore, appeared in a double character, both aspects of which were in direct antagonism to the pretensions which he had always assumed. The indignation caused in the public mind by this conduct soon manifested itself in an irresistible manner. Leave was given to bring in the bill, but when, on the 19th of February, it came up for second reading, the storm broke out. Milner Gibson moved an amendment, which, after stating that the House would at all times be ready to assist in remedying any defects in the criminal law, declared that "This House cannot but regret that her Majesty's Government, previously to inviting the House to amend the law of conspiracy at the present time, have not felt it to be their duty to reply to the important despatch received from the French Government, dated 'Paris, January 20th, 1858,' which has been laid before Parliament." On a division, this amendment was carried by 234 to 215. To make the situation more dramatic, Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright were the tellers who had to convey, through the Speaker, to the Premier this serious condemnation of his conduct. The blow was fatal to the Government, and on the 22nd of February their resignation was announced.

The fall of Palmerston's administration was followed by the formation of a Government by the Earl of Derby—a glaring anomaly in our constitutional system, being a Ministry in a minority in the House of Commons, and therefore holding office on the condition that they did not attempt to carry into actual legislation the political principles which they professed. There were two things in this arrangement which must be considered extraordinary—that the House should allow such a Government to exist; and that men should be found ready to take office on such terms.

It was said that the confused state of parties in Parliament made such a course necessary, but this is a commentary, and not an explanation. There was, in fact, no such complication in parties as had existed only a few years before, when, on the death of Sir Robert Peel, there were three separate sets of opinions held by prominent statesmen, no one set having a majority. In the present case the Parliament had been elected on the old party lines, affected only by the expression of confidence in Palmerston, which did not alter the broad issue. There was a clear Liberal majority in the House of Commons, if the Liberals had been loyal to their opinions.

The difficulty lay in the power and position of the Radicals, the force of their views in the country, and the unwillingness of the Whig leaders to frankly recognize the facts. The progress of Radicalism had been manifested not more in the importance of individual members than in the growth of opinion in the bulk of the party. This had been shown in the strength of the votes given on some of what might be considered test questions. On the three most important subjects especially—national education, religious liberty, and Parliamentary reform—the most decided advance had been made. On the last point every recent Ministry had declared that some change must be made, and Lord Derby, like his predecessors, was ready to promise a measure of the kind. The wise and honest way would have been for the Whig leaders, willing to accept a Radical proposal, to have called into office some members of the party which originated the policy, that it might be efficiently carried out. The objects of Whigs and Radicals, however, were not identical. Whigs and Conservatives alike desired, whilst making concessions to the popular demands, to accompany them by conditions and limitations which should preserve power to the same social class which had now the control of so many of the constituencies; and each was ready to give, if not active, at least passive support to the other, whilst attempts were made to invent some workable compromise. They either did not see that no

such policy could permanently succeed, or were willing to accept the delay certain to follow the adoption of even an imperfect scheme. In this the depth as well as the clearness of public opinion was misunderstood. The people wanted not the appearance, but the reality of power in the Government ; and it was certain that in no other way could the dead-lock of parties be ended, and a Ministry constructed strong enough in public support to overcome the inertia of the Peers and make progressive legislation possible.

For some time longer, however, the game of delay and compromise was to be played, and the establishment of the Derby Ministry was but another move. The new Premier, who knew exactly what his acceptance of office meant, did not evidently expect that considerations of political consistency would stand in the way of his obtaining colleagues, for, when he made his statement in the House of Lords on the 1st of March, he said that he had applied to men as divergent in opinion as Mr. Gladstone, the Duke of Newcastle, and Earl Grey, and was surprised to receive refusals from them all. The Government had to be formed, then, with no pretence of coalition which would give the semblance of Parliamentary support ; it was to exist avowedly on sufferance.

This plan of governing without a Government, of converting the Cabinet into a mechanical administrator of the decrees of Parliament, was unexpectedly successful in one case of supreme national importance. The outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, and the means by which it had been suppressed, had made a change in the form of Government of that country inevitable. It was a conviction almost universal amongst others than members and dependents of the old authority, that the period of mixed, and therefore partially irresponsible, government must end, and that the nation must assume the direct duty of ruling the millions of subjects of its great eastern empire. On the 12th of February Lord Palmerston—being then in office—had moved for leave to bring in a bill to transfer the government of

India from the Company to the Crown. A debate lasting over three nights took place, and on the 18th, on a division, the House, by 318 to 173, decided that the bill should be brought in, and by this vote it sanctioned the proposed transfer of power. The change of government prevented the measure being proceeded with; but it was not withdrawn, and the new ministers introduced a competing bill, which was called the "India Bill No. 2."

Disraeli brought in the measure on the 26th of March, and it proved to be one of the most miserable jumbles ever submitted to Parliament. Ministers, it seemed, wanted—or their Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted them—to pose as the real friends of representative government, and they proceeded to make the attempt in the usual fashion of beginners—not to say pretenders. In talking about elective government for India, they had no thought of representing the two hundred millions of people who were to be governed; but proposed that, of the new council to be constituted, five should be chosen by about 5000 persons who had been connected with the former government or army, or had been engaged in commercial or financial speculations in India, and five others by the Parliamentary constituencies of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. In the debate which followed, Mr. Bright fairly characterized these provisions when he said it struck him that they might be called clap-trap. The fate of such an ill-conceived scheme was not long in doubt. On the evening when it was introduced the House adjourned for the Easter recess, and before the holidays were over it was generally known that the bill would be rejected, and there was much anxiety in official and electioneering coteries as to the probable result. The Whigs were not ready to take office, and members on both sides were anxious to avoid the cost and trouble of a general election. Yet the Indian Bill was absolutely inadmissible; it could not even be mended. A method, however, was discovered out of the difficulty. Lord John Russell proposed that neither the Government bill nor that of Lord Palmerston should be pro-

ceeded with, but that the House should in committee consider a series of resolutions as the basis for a new measure. The proposal was eagerly accepted, and it was thus that the present machinery for the government of a great empire was framed. The method had some advantages in a case in which party considerations were not strongly pressed, and it enabled Parliament to have the full benefit of the wisdom and the constructive ability of the Radicals, which were conspicuously exhibited in the course of the discussions.

During the session ministers had many serious reminders of the nature of the tenure on which they held office. A most unpleasant one for the old Tories was the question of the admission of Jews to Parliament. The exclusion of Jews was a pet bit of religious persecution, which they had been allowed to perpetrate probably because the sufferers were neither numerous nor noisy. Now at last, at the very time that they were in office, the surrender had to be made; but it was done with a bad grace, which showed how very disagreeable the process was. The bill, which had passed the House of Commons by large majorities, contained two sections—one altering the form of the oath of abjuration, and the other allowing the Jews to take their oath without the words “on the true faith of a Christian.” On the second reading in the House of Lords, on the 23rd of April, the Premier, whilst not opposing the whole bill, gave notice that he would in committee vote for the rejection of the part affecting the Jews. This he did on the 30th of April, and the clause was accordingly struck out. The bill thus mutilated was sent to the Commons, who, on the 10th of May, refused to agree with the Lords’ amendment. There was some very plain speaking on the occasion, and Sir R. Bethell said that he should propose a plan by which the House of Commons could deal with the question of the admission of its members for itself. The House of Lords took the warning, and, although Derby would not so directly come down as to reinsert the old clause, he consented to the passing of a separate bill, giving each House power to provide by resolution for

the admission of Jews. The compromise was accepted, the bill passed, and on the 26th of July Baron Rothschild took his seat.

Another warning on the subject of religious liberty, which, although effective, was not so immediately accepted, was given by the progress of the bill for the abolition of church rates. This was introduced by Sir John Trelawney; was read a second time on the 17th of February by 214 to 160; and on the 8th of June was read a third time, and passed in the Commons by 266 to 203. The Peers, however, had done as much in this line as they could bear in one session, and on the 2nd of July the second reading was, on the motion of Lord Derby, defeated by 187 to 36. Yet it was seen in the next session that the Government, at least, were convinced that some concession must be made even here. Altogether they were having a far from happy time.

Ministers had said that they were prepared to give the question of Parliamentary reform a fair consideration, and the Radicals were determined to give them materials to consider. To begin with, there was in this business also a small practical success. A bill, introduced by Locke King, to abolish property qualification for members of Parliament was accepted by Government, and passed rapidly through both Houses. Thus one of the points of the People's Charter was quietly adopted: quite safely so far as the propertied classes were concerned, for until its natural complement—the payment of members—is accepted, it will be of little practical value. Still, the passing of such an Act was indicative of a change in feeling, and Lord Grey saw in it the inevitable thin end of the wedge. The House of Commons was as decided about the lowering of the county franchise, but not as successful. On the 10th of June the bill for that purpose was read a second time by 226 to 168, but there was neither time nor opportunity to proceed with it further. Milner Gibson, on the 21st of June, proposed a resolution, declaring that the paper duty was not a proper permanent source of

revenue, and that such financial arrangements should be made as would enable Parliament to dispense with it. The first part of the resolution was accepted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and carried. The session—not a pleasant one for either Whigs or Tories—was closed on the 3rd of August.

Parliament met on the 3rd of February, 1859, the Queen's speech saying, "Your attention will be called to the state of the laws which regulate the representation of the people in Parliament." The Radicals opened the campaign early. On the 7th of February Mr. Dillwyn obtained leave to bring in a bill on endowed schools; on the 8th Trelawney re-introduced his Church Rates Bill; and on the 17th of the same month Locke King took a similar step with regard to the abolition of the law of primogeniture. Of these questions that which related to church rates led to the most important discussions and divisions. On the 21st of February Walpole brought in and explained a Government scheme for dealing with the subject. The plan might have been called a provision for making church rates perpetual. It proposed to make the rate a landlords' rate; to enable owners to make existing rates a charge on land; to allow tenants to recover the rate from landlords; and to exempt from payment those who sign a written paper claiming exemption on the ground of being dissenters. Such a compromise was evidently impracticable. On the 9th of March the Government bill was defeated, on the motion for its second reading, by 254 to 171; and on the 15th of March Trelawney's abolition bill was read a second time by 242 to 168. The ministerial crisis and dissolution prevented further progress with the measure.

The catastrophe was brought about by the attempt of the Government to deal with the reform question. The proposal was an almost unmitigated piece of what is sometimes called Parliamentary strategy, but what plain people call political trickery. It had but one redeeming feature in it—the reduction of the county franchise, and that was accompanied by provisions for alteration of boundaries, the disfranchise-

ment of freeholders living in boroughs, and other conditions which rendered its action uncertain. The most amazing thing about it was the method of dealing with the borough franchise. The whole reason why a Reform Bill had been found to be necessary was the demand, which all parties had admitted to be irresistible, of the populations of towns for some direct voice in the choice of representatives, and this was the one thing which was practically refused. The household franchise in boroughs was to be left at £10. Every imaginary claim was to be acknowledged, but the real and solid one was rejected. Stockholders, savings-bank depositors, graduates of universities, ministers of religion, and certificated schoolmasters were all to have votes; but the mass of the working classes were still to be excluded. There was also a little tinkering with redistribution. Fifteen small boroughs were to be deprived of one member each, and the number was to be distributed over three counties and six new boroughs.

The plan was condemned the moment it was known. Russell declared at once that it would be opposed at every stage; and Mr. Bright objected to the total exclusion of the working classes, and to the "fancy franchises," which were absurd and delusive. Leave was given to bring in the bill, but there was little doubt as to its fate. Its first effect, however, was to cause a split in the Ministry itself. Walpole and Henley both resigned—the former because of the reduction of the county franchise—and the latter partly because he also objected to the identity of franchise, but also because he wanted a real bill which would admit more of the working people. On the 21st of March the second reading was moved, and a long discussion took place, lasting altogether for eight nights. Nearly every Liberal speaker condemned the bill; but Roebuck was one of the few who thought that, instead of its being summarily rejected, it might be served as the India Bill had been—taken possession of by the House and altered to suit the wishes of the majority. This was evidently a method impossible with such a measure, and on the 31st of March the division took place, and the Govern-

ment were defeated by 330 to 291. They decided not to resign, and on the 4th of April announced their intention to appeal to the country. Some formal business was done, the only party question raised being that of the ballot, introduced by Berkeley on the 12th of April, when he was defeated by 102 to 99 ; and on the 19th of that month Parliament was prorogued and dissolved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PALMERSTON'S LAST ADMINISTRATION (1859-1865).

THE dissolution of Parliament was a desperate venture—the Prime Minister's only chance, as it appeared, of saving his position, his party, and his principles. If the old Parliament were kept in existence two things would happen, both disastrous to the Conservatives. A Liberal Ministry would be called to power, and an effective Reform Bill must be passed. The former danger might be only temporary, to be overcome as it had been before, if the second one could be avoided. But a constitutional change which would alter the character of many of the constituencies, and give to the people a real share in the representation, might prove a more lasting evil, and mean not only the relinquishment of office for a time, but the loss of political and social power for the governing class. Clearly, then, the risk attending a general election was worth running.

The experiment was not entirely unsuccessful, although it did not secure its primary purpose of saving the Ministry. The Liberal majority was seriously diminished, but it was not destroyed. When the elections were over, the newspapers of the time calculated that the returns showed—Liberals, 353 ; Conservatives, 302, giving a Liberal majority of fifty-one, including a double return for Aylesbury, which did not materially affect the issue.* This showed a Liberal loss of twenty-three as compared with the numbers in the previous

* *Times*, May 20, 1859. McCalmont's "Poll Book," published in 1879, gives the numbers as—Liberals, 348 ; Conservatives, 305 : Liberal majority, 43.

Parliament. There were forty-four losses and twenty-one gains, boroughs and counties both helping to increase the Conservative following.

The alteration in numbers produced a good deal of uncertainty and commotion amongst the Liberals. It made the absolute union of all sections a condition of return to power, and the possible ministers, having to be dependent upon keeping Radicals and Whigs alike in good humour, had no easy task before them. This seemed to secure some practical advance, because without that the Radicals would in no way have been conciliated. On the other hand, the ultra-Whig section would not allow a too rapid progress, and on the whole their disaffection would be more dangerous than that of the Radicals, because in a case of revolt they could secure the Conservative vote in their favour, and there was the House of Lords always ready to give the finishing stroke to any proposal about which there was any disagreement amongst the Liberals.

The difficulty arose at the very outset, in the attempted formation of a new Ministry. It was at last recognized on all hands that the Radicals were a definite power, and that they must have a direct representation in the Cabinet. Not, as had been hitherto the case, the selection of some individual at the sacrifice if not of his principles, at least of his free advocacy of them; but the admission of men who would be expected to keep the Radical policy before Parliament when in office as they had done when they were out. The process which had nominally elevated, but had really silenced, Hobhouse and Molesworth and Sheil, was no longer possible, and this was a fact which prolonged the negotiations for the formation of a Ministry. Russell and Palmerston had agreed to compromise their differences, and a few years back that would have been sufficient. Now the case was altered, and the fact was set forth in most melancholy terms by a writer in the *Times*, who said, "What we lament is, that the Liberals would return to power with an aggravation of the difficulties which drove them from it. We cannot flatter ourselves that

the events which have reconciled Palmerston and Russell will make Bright less assuming and confident."

The Whig leaders had to meet the case, and they did it in a fairly satisfactory manner. If the object was to give the Radicals an actual voice, but not an important vote, in the inner council of the State, it was obtained by the selection made. Cobden, who was then abroad, had the office of President of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the Cabinet, left open for his acceptance. Such an appointment was evidently *bondâ fide*. No Whig could even hope, much less believe, that Cobden could be silenced or diverted from his own line of policy by any place. Milner Gibson, who was made head of the Poor Law Board, and was also in the Cabinet, was, if less decided in character than Cobden, a sound and conscientious Radical, who, if not able to lead the Ministry in his own direction, might at least be counted on to resist any reactionary policy. Charles Gilpin, who also possessed the confidence of many Radicals, had a subordinate office. If Mr. Bright was to be left out, it would not have been easy to find a better representation of the party, supposing that Cobden would accept the offer made to him. This, however, he declined to do. On his return to England, he let it be known that his opposition to Palmerston was too thorough and sincere to admit of taking office under him. Whatever may have been thought of the immediate effect of this refusal on the fortunes of the Radical party, there can be no doubt that it was calculated to elevate the tone of political morality, and to increase the personal influence of the statesman who would not sacrifice principle for place.

The necessity of filling the vacancy thus occasioned in a manner which should be acceptable to the Radicals and serviceable to their policy was generally admitted. A writer in the *Examiner* newspaper gave definite expression to this feeling in commenting on Cobden's refusal. "We trust," he wrote, "that the place vacant will be filled by a staunch

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reformer, as the number of advanced reformers in the Government—professedly framed on the representative principle—even in the proposed arrangement including Mr. Cobden, is not proportionate to the strength of the Radical party measured by the test of the ballot.”* When Mr. Villiers was chosen to take the vacant seat in the Cabinet, it was felt that a satisfactory decision had been made. By his long service to his party, no less than by his unswerving devotion to its principles, the old free-trader had earned the gratitude and the confidence of the country. If he was not as likely as Cobden to impress his individuality upon the Cabinet, he too might be trusted to be a constant advocate of a progressive policy.

The discussions and consultations which preceded this final arrangement were not concluded before the meeting of Parliament. They were, indeed, so far from settled that it was doubtful if the Government would not for some time longer be left in the hands of the minority, owing to the inability of the majority to settle their own differences. On the 31st of May, 1859, the Houses met, and, after the preliminary business of electing a Speaker and swearing in members of the House of Commons, the session was formally opened by the Queen in person on the 7th of June. During the interval the Liberals had completed their negotiations, and when the debate on the address came on they were prepared to make a definite attack upon the Ministry. The royal speech announced the commencement of the war of France and Sardinia with Austria, and declared the intention of the Government to preserve a strict neutrality, but at the same time to increase the naval forces. As to Parliamentary reform, the Queen said she would with pleasure give her sanction to any well-considered measure, but thought the subject would have to be postponed to next year.

The opposition determined to meet the Government with an amendment to the address, declaring a want of confidence in her Majesty's ministers. This was moved by the Marquis

* *Examiner*, July 2, 1859.

of Hartington, and led to an animated discussion. On a division, the amendment was carried by 223 to 210, giving a majority of thirteen only against the Government. The unanimity of the Liberal party had not been quite complete, two votes especially having been given against them. Mr. Roebuck on this occasion took the final step which severed him from his old connections—the Chartist Radical giving his help to the Tories, and Mr. Gladstone giving the last vote which Conservatism was destined to receive from him. The majority, if not large, was sufficient for the purpose, and on the 17th of June it was announced that ministers had resigned, and that Lord Palmerston had succeeded in forming an Administration.

The new Cabinet contained nine old Whigs, four Peelites, and two Radicals, and its formation marked the definite completion of another stage in the progress of the Radical party. They were now admitted to a position not of equality, but of independence, in the Government, and if they could not originate, could at least try to affect its policy. It was not possible, however, for them, in the existing state of the constituencies to exercise an immediate influence on affairs. It required another Reform Act to enable them to secure an equality of position; we have now to see if the result of another advance will not be to give them the actual predominance which their support in the country, the success of their policy, and their ability alike indicate as inevitable. One great advantage was derived from this preliminary stage. The people had learned that the policy of the Radicals was wise and far-seeing, and they were accustomed to find it piece by piece adopted after long agitation first by the Whigs, and afterwards by all parties in Parliament. But the men who originated the policy had no opportunities of directing its administration. The country had to be convinced by experience that there was good practical political ability, as well as sound theory, to be found in the party of progress, and that there was no reason why Liberal measures should be entrusted to any one but their authors for realization.

This lesson was taught during the existence of Palmerston's Ministry. The management of the department of the Board of Trade, to which he was transferred on Cobden's refusal, by Milner Gibson, was admirable; and Mr. Villiers at the Poor Law Board gave evidence not only of ordinary administrative talent, but of the statesmanlike faculty of meeting and dealing with grave and sudden difficulties. During Villier's tenure of office the occurrence of the "cotton famine" called for special legislation and for immediate action in an emergency, and both demands were met to the full by the Radical president of the Board.*

A still more striking example of political insight, combined with extraordinary statesmanlike ability, was furnished in the case of the commercial treaty with France. That treaty was originated, negotiated, and completed by Richard Cobden alone. The central idea which Cobden had in view was a broad and noble one—to unite two great nations by the bonds of a friendship based on mutual interests, and so to destroy the jealousies and rivalries which had involved them in wars innumerable. That not only the great cause of peace would be promoted, but that the material welfare of both peoples would be increased, was a consideration which no wise statesman would overlook. With these great objects in view, Cobden began his work, without much encouragement in England, and with the Government and people of France alike unprepared to receive any such a proposition. Every difficulty which could be imagined presented itself, and the industry and prudence by which they were met and overcome were as remarkable as the wisdom by which the project was conceived. A year's anxious and arduous labour was devoted to the cause, and it was not until the 10th of February, 1860, that the treaty was submitted to Parliament. No words can more fittingly describe the work than those used by Mr. Gladstone in the

* The services rendered by Mr. Villiers in this office are ~~fairly set out~~ in the Political Memoir attached to *Free Trade Speeches*, in pp. lxxxii. to xciii. inclusive—a record which deserves to be studied.

House of Commons. "Rare," he said, "is the privilege of any man, who, having fourteen years ago rendered to his country one signal service, now again, within the same brief span of life, decorated neither by land nor title, bearing no mark to distinguish him from the people he loves, has been permitted to perform another great and memorable service to his sovereign and his country." *

By the 30th of June, 1859, the arrangements of the new Ministry were completed, and on the evening of that day the statements were made in both Houses. Earl Granville, in the Lords, said that the question of Parliamentary reform would engage the earnest attention of the Government, with a view to the introduction of a measure early in the following session. He reminded his hearers that the elections had turned mainly on that question—a fact that is worth remembering, in view of the persistent declaration of some of the Whigs that there was no popular demand for reform. The war in Italy attracted much attention, and it was made the excuse—for it was really no justification—for demands for an increase in our armaments. The discussions on this subject took up much of the time of Parliament, and destroyed what little chance there ever had been of practical domestic work in the remainder of the broken session. The Church Rates Abolition Bill was, on the 13th of July, read a second time by 263 to 193, Palmerston for the first time giving it his support. The triumph was a barren one, as there was no time to proceed with the measure. The Endowed Schools Bill was again introduced by Mr. Dillwyn, was read a second time by 210 to 192, and then referred to a select committee, which meant shelving it for a time. Parliament was prorogued on the 13th of August.

The session of 1860 was opened, on the 24th of January, by a speech which referred to the Italian war and the French commercial treaty, and said that "measures will be laid before you for amending the laws which regulate the representation of the people in Parliament, and for placing the representation upon a broader and firmer basis." The bill thus promised

* Budget speech, 10th of February.

was not introduced until the 1st of March, when Lord John Russell explained its provisions. The proposals were to reduce the county franchise to £10 occupiers, and the borough to £6. There was to be a little redistribution, one member being taken from each borough having less than 7000 inhabitants, which would give twenty-five seats for appropriation. Of these, two were to be given to West Riding, and one each to thirteen other counties or divisions, five to new boroughs, one each additional to Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Leeds, and one to London University. The bill was accepted, but without enthusiasm, by the Radicals; it was opposed, but without bitterness, by the Tories; its fatal opponents were the Whigs. It was now that they showed the strength of their position, arising from the near balance of power between the two great parties, and the ease with which, by alliance with the Conservatives, they could check any active Liberalism of ministers. They were encouraged in this policy of resistance by the absence of violent agitation outside. The quietness did not really arise from indifference on the part of the people, and those who assumed that it did had afterwards to pay in increased concession for the mistake they made. The fact was, that all parties in turn, Conservatives, Whigs, and Radicals, had admitted the necessity of reform, and had submitted proposals for its accomplishments; and the English people, being practical politicians and not mere visionaries, accepted in good faith this universal profession, and did not see why they should make extraordinary efforts to obtain what was so generally offered.

Lord Granville had declared, at the opening of the new Parliament, that the elections had turned on this question, but this constitutional expression of the national will the Whigs chose to forget, and they began at once to cabal for the defeat of the Government scheme. The second reading was moved on the 19th of March, and was continued by adjournment over six days, during which the secession was plainly manifested. Macaulay opposed the bill openly, and Ramsden, Walter, and

other Whigs, did the same in a less direct manner. The second reading was carried without a division; but the committee stage was interrupted by another long debate, in the course of which, on one division on the 7th of June, the Government only obtained a majority of twenty-one, the numbers being 269 to 248. Some of the arguments made use of were curious, looked at in the light gained from subsequent events. Disraeli * thought that a measure which founded the constituency upon the principle of numbers, not fitness, and which added 200,000 electors, composing one homogeneous class, having the same interest, who would neutralize the voices of the present borough constituency, was not wise and well considered. Rolt and other members declared that the bill would lead to household suffrage, and then to universal suffrage. The speakers did not see, what is obvious now, that the refusal of a moderate measure did not prevent, but hastened the adoption of a more Radical policy. The delay and the weakness of ministers made ultimate success impossible, and on the 11th of June Russell withdrew the bill. On this occasion Mr. Bright explained and denounced the policy of the seceders. He said the opposition had been emboldened by members on the Liberal side of the House, who wanted a pure Whig Government, which would never be seen again—which was just as much extinct as the dodo. This language was justified not only by the strength of the Radicals in the country, but by their numbers in the House, as again shown in a division on Berkeley's proposal, made on the 20th of March, to introduce a bill for the adoption of the ballot, for which 107 members voted.

Two other Radical measures obtained considerable support, but did not become law. On the 21st of March Dillwyn moved the second reading of his Endowed Schools Bill, but was defeated by 190 to 120. Better fortune attended Trelawney's Church Rate Abolition Bill, which was read a second time on the 8th of February by 263 to 234, and read a third time on the 19th of April by 235 to 226. It was, of

* On the 19th of March, on the second reading.

course, thrown out by the Lords, who, on the 10th of June, refused the second reading by 128 to 31.

Apart from these efforts of the Radicals and the defeat of the ministerial Reform Bill, the session which closed on the 28th of August, 1860, was made memorable by two transactions of an important character, one of which led to results the full effect of which is not yet realized. The first of these two events was a conflict between the two Houses on a question of taxation, when the Peers, encouraged by the divisions and consequent weakness of the Liberal party, ventured to alter the means of raising the revenue upon which the Commons had decided. Part of the financial scheme of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—Mr. Gladstone—had been the repeal of the paper duty, and the raising of money from other sources. The bill to abolish this tax was read a third time and passed by the Commons on the 8th of May, by a majority of nine. On the 21st of the same month, when it came up for second reading in the House of Lords, it was rejected by 193 to 104. Much discussion took place on this subject, but after all explanations, and defence of the Peers on technical grounds, the broad fact remained that the spirit of the Constitution had been violated. It is the undoubted right of the Commons to decide from what sources the imperial revenue shall be raised, and what taxes shall be laid upon the country. By their vote on the Paper Duty Bill the Lords reversed this principle, and decided that a tax which the Commons had refused should still be levied upon the people. Ministers, uncertain of their position, took the insult quietly, although Mr. Gladstone made an indignant protest. They proposed and carried three declaratory resolutions, but they allowed the tax to be continued.*

* The position of Palmerston at this time towards the Radicals as understood by the Tory leaders, is illustrated by a statement of Lord Malmesbury, who says, after the rejection of the Paper Duty Bill, "In this critical state of public affairs Lord Derby had desired me to go to Lady Palmerston and assure her of the support of our whole party against the Radicals, and to give a positive promise that we will not coalesce with them in or out of office."—*Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, vol. ii., p. 228.

The other and more important event, to which reference has been made, was the passing of an Act to amend the law relating to the tenure and improvement of land in Ireland. This Act, introduced by Cardwell on the 29th of March, went through both Houses with very little discussion. That the English Radicals did not perceive the mischievous effects of the proposal, and that even the Irish members did not oppose it more strenuously, was a proof of the force of the central doctrine of Radicalism, that no legislation can be safe or satisfactory in which the people directly interested have not a real and efficient representation. There is no doubt that the measure was honestly intended by its introducers to benefit all classes of the Irish people; but the small tenant farmers of that country were unrepresented, and English politicians, acting on English ideas, entirely misunderstood the case with which they were dealing. Proposing to secure the consolidation of the law, it really "contained a clause calculated to destroy the tenant's right to compensation, either as to the present or the past." * The Act fortunately had little direct effect, but it destroyed the faith of the Irish tenantry in English legislation; led immediately to an immense emigration; and laid the foundation of the Fenian outbreak and of the agrarian agitation, which, in their turn, have forced the English Parliament to deal with Irish land on principles consonant with the customs and traditions of Ireland, and therefore with the essential justice of the case.

The session of 1861 was opened on the 5th of February by a speech made interesting by a reference to the outbreak of the American civil war, but which was almost silent with regard to domestic affairs. As to the American crisis, there was at the commencement a very general feeling in favour of preserving a strict neutrality, and, so far as Parliamentary expression went, there was little difference of opinion. By degrees, however, there was developed not a party, but a set of tendencies in which sympathy with what was supposed to

* *The Parliamentary History of the Irish Land Question*, by O'Brien, 1880, pp. 114 and 115, and notes.

be the aristocracy of the South was opposed to the democracy of the North. In addition to this, there was a still more despicable feeling manifested—one of jealousy towards the power of the great republic of the West, and a wish that it might be weakened by the success of the rebellion. The most earnest Radicals saw not only the folly but the wickedness of this policy, although it made some way in certain social circles. But one of the most remarkable circumstances in international history was the clearness with which the bulk of the people of the great towns saw that the issue was one between freedom and slavery, and the firmness with which, even when some of their old leaders and many of the Liberal organs of opinion deserted them, they remained true to the great principle for which the North was contending. Even under the bitter trials to which the Lancashire artisans were subjected by the cotton famine, they never swerved from this noble attitude, although they were tempted by the suggestion that an interference in favour of the South would open the ports and revive their trade. If anything were wanted to prove with how great safety and advantage the English working people may be called upon to take a part in their own government, it was this clearness of insight into the merits of a great national question, and this resolute determination to support the right.

The tone of the Queen's speech, with respect to home politics, was an acknowledgment that the Government had accepted the result of the informal alliance between Whigs and Conservatives, and were prepared to adopt a policy of inaction. As regarded the Prime Minister himself, this course was taken with perfect cheerfulness. He had never been an ardent reformer, and, although willing to make moderate advances, was not ready to risk loss of power on their behalf. The times seemed propitious for the success of this rather ignoble policy. The Radicals differed from their rivals, the Whigs, in one respect, which was important to Lord Palmerston. They were not prepared to sacrifice the ministers who would not insist upon reform, for the sacrifice would not have brought them practically nearer to their object. The

Whigs had not hesitated to oppose their leaders on what ought to have been made a matter of confidence. So long, then, as Palmerston should remain in power, it was generally felt that there would be no substantial reform. The Radicals had, therefore, to take up their old part of protest in Parliament and agitation outside. Their chances of ultimate success were, however, very much greater than they had ever been before. Their numbers were largely increased—that meant that their opinions and policy had spread more widely amongst the great body of Liberals ; and there was a growing belief that no active political and social life was to be looked for without a substantial measure of Parliamentary reform.

The strength of the party was tested on several occasions during the session. The first attempt of the kind was a comparative failure. In the debate on the address, Mr. White, one of the members for Brighton, moved an amendment in favour of Parliamentary reform, and was defeated by 129 to 46. Better support was given to three other proposals, which were brought forward in a more deliberate and formal manner. On the 19th of February leave was given to introduce two bills, one by Locke King, to reduce the county franchise ; and one by Baines, to lower the borough franchise to £6. Both these provisions had been included in the Government bill of the previous session, and had, indeed, formed its main features. They were, of course, lost on the second reading. On the 13th of March Locke King's bill was rejected by 248 to 220. Palmerston, Russell, and Gladstone all voting with the minority. The Borough Franchise Bill came up on the 10th of April, and that was defeated by 245 to 193. Berkeley did not get so far with his Ballot Bill, for on the 23rd of April leave was refused for its introduction by 279 to 154. Judging from these notes, it appeared that the Radicals might be reckoned as something over 150, and that there were over 200 Liberals really willing to adopt some measure of reform.

The Radicals received still greater support on questions affecting religious liberty, which did not threaten to interfere with territorial influence in the constituencies. On the 27th

of February Trelawney's Church Rate Abolition Bill was read a second time by 281 votes to 266; but on the 19th of June, when it came up for the third reading, a curious fate befell it. On a division the numbers were equal, 274 voting on each side and the Speaker, called upon for his casting vote, gave it against the bill. Sir Morton Peto introduced a bill for allowing the burial of Nonconformists in churchyards, thus commencing a Parliamentary agitation destined to last for some years. On this occasion the bill was rejected on the second reading, the division, taken on the 24th of April, showing 155 for, and 236 against. The session closed on the 6th of August.

Parliament assembled on the 6th of February, 1862. The speech commenced with a reference to the great sorrow which had fallen on the Queen by the loss of her husband, who died on the 14th of December, 1861, and to the sympathy which her Majesty had received from all classes of her subjects. The settlement of the difference with America arising out of the unfortunate "Trent" affair was also announced, and the commencement of the Mexican difficulty followed. As to domestic affairs, they seemed to enter but very slightly into the consideration of the Government, the only promise with regard to them being that measures for the improvement of law, including a bill for rendering the title to land more simple and its transfer more easy, and that other measures of public usefulness, would be submitted. On the 18th of February the Premier, replying to a rather unnecessary question put by Mr. Cox, said that it was not the intention of the Government to introduce a reform bill.*

The most interesting debates of the early part of the session were those which took place on the subject of education and the famous "Revised Code" to regulate the grants of the department. This code, prepared by Mr. Lowe, had been formally submitted to Parliament at the close of the last

* Lord John Russell, to whom the question might have been unpleasant, had, in the previous year, been removed to the serener sphere of the House of Lords, where no such questioning was to be feared.

session, and had been left for public discussion, of which it received a full share. The object of the alterations it contained was to secure a performance of the work for which the grants were made, and to establish a system of payment by results. The immediate effect was to raise the cry of interference with vested interests. Managers of schools, clergymen, and teachers assumed that because they had once received money without conditions, they were to go on for ever receiving it in the same way. The agitation was to some extent successful, backed as it was by Bishops and Peers, Tories and Whigs. On the 11th of March Mr. Walpole laid upon the table of the House of Commons a series of resolutions he intended to move as amendments to the code. Ministers had to give way, and modifications were made. One great good had been done, however: the country was made aware of the folly of entrusting the public funds to irresponsible people, and the cause of representative government was so far advanced.

The usual attempts were made by the Radicals, but more by way of protest and the education of public opinion than from any hope of immediate gain. That hope, indeed, so far as the existing Parliament was concerned, grew fainter instead of stronger, and the success of the Tory-Whig alliance encouraged further defection. Thus, on the 14th of May, the second reading of the Church Rates Abolition Bill was rejected by a majority of one, the numbers being 287 to 286. In the early sessions of the Parliament it had been carried by the Commons by good majorities, in 1861 the votes were equal, and now there was a majority against the measure. So it was with the ballot, which this year was presented in two forms, one as applying to Parliamentary, and the other to Municipal, elections. Leave was given to bring in both bills, but one was rejected on the 18th of June by eighty-three to forty-five, and the other on the 2nd of July by 211 to 126. An attempt was made by Mr. Ayrton to improve the law of compensation to workmen in the case of accidents. The bill was introduced on the 11th of February, and defeated on the

second reading on the 19th of March. On the 30th of May a proposal to abolish purchase in the army was made by Sir De Lacy Evans, and lost by 247 to 62; and the Endowed Schools Bill had to be withdrawn.

At the close of a session so useless, a formal demonstration against the miserable policy of the Ministry was made by Cobden, who, although he disclaimed the position of a party leader, was entitled to speak on behalf of the Radicals in and out of Parliament. It was on the 1st of August, after notice given, that he brought forward his impeachment of the Government. The principles of the Liberal party, he said, were retrenchment, non-intervention, and reform, and the Ministry had violated them all. "If a party," he said, "violates its professed principles, I think that party should be called an imposture." It would be better for the Liberals to be out of power than to be nominally in office without forwarding the objects for which they existed. "I say, therefore, that, facing even that which I may regard as the worst alternative of this state of things, if there is nobody but the noble lord to mislead us and mock our principles instead of enforcing them, let us go into opposition, and there we shall find leaders who will rally us to some principles." This was a protest which had its effect in the country, but Cobden did not propose to take any vote, and influence in the House of Commons could not be obtained. Palmerston had lost the confidence of all that was active and earnest in his own party, but he could only be displaced by a union between Conservatives and Radicals, and that was an impossible conjuncture; so he relied as much as ever on his policy of inaction, and practically defied public opinion. Parliament was prorogued on the 7th of August.

The royal speech with which the session of 1863 was opened, on February 15, seemed framed to show the most studied contempt for the opinion of the Radicals in Parliament, and for the demands of the people outside. Other speeches have been bare in their references to home affairs, but this one stands alone in the series as having mention of no single

item of domestic policy. "Various measures," it said, "of public usefulness and improvement will be submitted to your consideration," but neither Parliament nor country were of sufficient importance to be told what direction their thoughts and labours would be invited to take. If he could get through without a disturbance in foreign affairs, the Premier did not intend to give the Conservatives anything to oppose at home, and the Radicals could bring forward no proposition, saving the improbable one of a direct vote of censure, on which they could receive support from the other side. So it was likely, as Lord Derby said in speaking on the address, to be "a quiet, humdrum session."

It was indeed uphill work to keep alive the cause of reform in such a Parliament, and with such a minister in power. The Radicals, however, went through the process with commendable spirit, if with decreasing success. On the 6th of February Trelawney once more rallied to the anti-church rate contest, but on the 29th of April the second reading of his bill was rejected by 285 to 275, a falling off even from the low standard of the past year. The Endowed Schools Bill, which was introduced on the 6th of February, did not go to a division on second reading. The Burials Bill was again thrown out on the 15th of April, by 221 to 96. The most interesting debates on religious questions were those which took place on the Irish Church, which now came up for serious consideration, after having been put on one side since the great Whig desertion of the Appropriation clause in 1838. On the 28th of May Mr. Dillwyn moved for a select committee on Irish religious endowments, and after three adjournments the order was discharged to give place to a motion by Bernal Osborne, on the same subject. This was brought forward on the 26th of June, and the debate was continued on the 29th, when the motion was shelved by an adjournment of the House.

It is almost needless to say that this revived attention, given to an Irish question, was partly to be accounted for by the signs of coming trouble in Ireland. Once more there

were bad seasons, and the people, living hopelessly under the rule of alien laws, could only suffer and complain. The Act of 1860 was manifesting, to all who understood the question, its inability to do anything but increase the sense of injustice ; yet the English Government, speaking by the reckless mouth of the young Sir Robert Peel, declared that they considered that it was a final settlement of the question.* In times of distress all symptoms of bad government showed themselves, and this symptom of the shameful dominance of a foreign Church, as it touched the consciences and sympathies of an excitable people, was always uppermost. The Fenian outbreak, which was beginning to organize itself, although it had not disestablishment as an aim, used it as an instrument, and from now to 1870 the question was never lost sight of.

The American civil war attracted the attention of all parties throughout the session. The vindication of the cause of the North was a forlorn sort of hope for politicians, which only the strongest Radicals sustained, and in which Mr. Bright bore a noble part. But fortunately the principle of neutrality was supported by the Conservative leaders, and Disraeli especially was firm in its defence. On the other side, there were loud-mouthed boasters, like Roebuck and Laird, who did their best to embroil the two great nations in war. This feeling found its most extraordinary expression in a speech by Roebuck, on the 30th of June, when he moved a resolution in favour of recognition of the South. With an impertinence almost sublime, he declared, "As far as my influence goes, I am determined to do all I can to prevent the reconstruction of the union ; and I hope that the balance of power on the American continent will in future prevent any one state from tyrannizing over the world as the republic did." The resolution was withdrawn ; but Palmerston, whilst he was too clever to be pushed into absolute intervention, was not wise enough or honest enough to be true to the spirit of the neutrality

* Speaking in reply to a resolution moved by Mr. Maguire on the 23rd of June, "that as the Land Act of 1860 had been inoperative, a royal commission might be appointed to consider the Irish land laws."

which he professed. The consequence was a violation of the law of nations which passed for dignified independence at the time, but afterwards cost the nation a sacrifice both in wealth and honour. It was on the 13th of July that Roebuck withdrew his resolution, and on the 28th Parliament was prorogued.

The description of one session, under the government of Palmerston, is very much like that of another, so far as regards internal administration. There is some variety in the nature of the foreign complications with which they contended with different degrees of feebleness, but the dull routine of inaction at home was broken only by the sound and successful financial policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In his department Mr. Gladstone was showing an ever-increasing desire to administer the commercial and financial affairs of the country with a view to improve the condition and advance the interests of the great body of the people. The Queen's speech, read at the opening of the session of 1864, on the 4th of February, so far differed from that of 1863, that it did mention one domestic subject to which attention would be directed. But whether or not that was an advance may be questioned when it is remembered that the favoured topic was the report of a commission, which had been appointed to revise the various forms of subscription and declaration required to be made by the clergy of the Established Church.

Under these conditions the prospects of reform were not very hopeful, and yet in this dreary time one gleam of light was shown which gave a promise of brighter days. On the 11th of May the bill introduced by Mr. Baines for extending the borough franchise came on for second reading. On that occasion it was strongly supported by Mr. Gladstone, in a speech which was remarkable for a bold and statesmanlike view of the question. He advocated reform because he had trust and confidence in the mass of the people, and because they had shown wisdom and self-restraint, which proved their fitness for self-government. He declared his opinion "that every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some

consideration of personal unfitness or political danger, is morally entitled to come within the pale of the Constitution." This was no mere Whig concession to popular pressure, but a broad recognition of Radical principles, and from that time forward Mr. Gladstone has more and more endeared himself to the confidence and affection of the people, and of that party in Parliament by which they are most directly represented. The fate of the bill was not likely to be affected by this adhesion, and it was defeated by 272 to 216; but it was strongly felt that success was now only a question of time. Shortly before this, on the 13th of April, a closer division had been taken on the second reading of Locke King's County Franchise Bill, the numbers being 227 for, and 254 against. Berkeley's resolution in favour of the ballot, moved on the 21st of June, was rejected by 212 to 123.

During the session two losses befell the Ministry, although the effect was felt only by the individuals, the Government, or rather the Premier, remaining as strong as ever. In the first of these events the Radicals were directly interested, it being a member of their party who was attacked. Mr. Stansfeld had but recently been appointed one of the Lords of the Admiralty, and was showing considerable administrative capacity. At the trial in Paris for a conspiracy to murder the Emperor, it was stated by the Procureur-Imperial that a paper had been found in the possession of one of the accused, directing him to write for money to Mr. Flowers, at 35, Thurloe Square, Brompton, where, the Procureur said, a member of the English Parliament resided, who, in 1855, had been appointed banker to the Tibaldi conspirators against the Emperor's life. The address given was that of Mr. Stansfeld. On the 14th of March notice was taken of this statement in the House of Commons; and on the 17th a further debate took place, and Mr. Stansfeld of course denied that he had been concerned in, or cognizant of, any conspiracy of the kind. On the following night the subject was again discussed, and Mr. Stansfeld said that he had allowed Mazzini, the Italian patriot, to have letters directed to his house under the name

of M. Fiori—the Italian name for Flowers—but he indignantly protested against its being supposed that Mazzini would be a party to a conspiracy to murder. Sir Henry Stracy moved—“That the speech of the Procureur-Imperial on the trial of Greco, implicating a member of her Majesty’s Government in the plot for the assassination of our ally, the Emperor of the French, deserves the serious consideration of this House.” This resolution was defeated by a majority of ten, the numbers being 171 to 161 ; but, in consequence of the debate and the closeness of the division, Mr. Stansfeld sent in his resignation, which was accepted. No one pretended to think that he had known of any conspiracy ; the real offence was, that he avowed his acquaintance and sympathy with one of whom kings and emperors were in fear, and the chance of striking at the Government through him was an opportunity not to be resisted. There was a possibility, too, that the Whigs and Radicals might be estranged by the publicity given to the subject.

The other resignation was that of Mr. Lowe, Vice-President of the Council. The clerical and other managers of schools had never forgiven that gentleman for the trouble he had caused them by his revised code. In his own department there were partisans of the same colour, and some of the inspectors were inclined to lecture their own chief in the reports which they presented. Mr. Lowe, following the example of all his predecessors, chose to decide what part of these reports should be printed at the cost of the State, and made considerable excisions in some of them. On this one of the most bitter of the denominationalists, Lord Robert Cecil—now the Marquis of Salisbury—moved “That in the opinion of this House the mutilation of the reports of her Majesty’s inspectors of schools, and the exclusion from them of statements and opinions adverse to the educational views entertained by the Committee of Council, while matters favourable to them are admitted, are violations of the understanding under which the appointment of inspectors was originally sanctioned by Parliament, and tend entirely to destroy the

value of their reports.” This resolution was carried by 101 to 93, and Mr. Lowe resigned his office. In doing this he so successfully vindicated the conduct which had been impugned that Lord R. Cecil said, if Mr. Lowe had, on the former occasion, given an explanation similar to that now given, the motion would probably not have been pressed to a division. In other words, he confessed that his action had not been based on such knowledge of the facts as could have alone justified his violent attack. On the motion of the Premier, a committee was appointed to consider the whole question. This committee having reported entirely exculpating Mr. Lowe, the resolution, which its own mover admitted to be indefensible, was formally rescinded.

The Ministry thus lost the services of a man whose relations to party organizations have given a perhaps undue importance to his proceedings. He is what may be called an exotic or artificially produced Whig—one, that is to say, who thinks that legislation ought to be based on what he holds as Liberal principles ; that the people should be well governed, but that they should always be governed, and not govern. He differs from the true historic Whig in this, that the qualification which he would substitute for popular election would be not family influence and traditional power, but an undefined intellectual status, which his set have almost deified under the term “ culture.” Some few of the elect, who have gone through a process of scholastic training, are gifted, according to their own view, with a sort of divine right to say to what extent the people of this country should be entrusted with a voice in the regulation of their own affairs. Mr. Lowe proved himself not a successful example of the strength of his theory, his failure as financial minister showing that some other test, besides the most entire self-confidence, is necessary to secure good administrators. Radicals say that the only safe test is an appeal to the suffrage of the whole nation.

The time did not seem very appropriate for trying legislative experiments, but in this session the first attempt was made to introduce a measure which has since been the subject

of much popular agitation and party difficulty. On the 8th of June Mr. Lawson moved the second reading of his Permissive Bill, which was to give power to a certain proportion of ratepayers in a district to veto the issuing of licences for the sale of intoxicating liquors. On this its first appearance the measure was rejected by 292 to 35, but it was supported by men who to a burning zeal added untiring industry, and it has been forced upon the attention of Parliament in a manner altogether unprecedented.

Towards the close of the session the Conservatives plucked up courage to try a fall with the Government. Encouraged by the charges brought the year before by Cobden, they thought there was a chance of some secession from the Radicals, and a very small one would have been sufficient for the purpose of defeating ministers. On the 4th of July motions of want of confidence were submitted to both Houses. That in the Lords was carried by a majority of nine, the numbers being 177 to 168. In the Commons the debate was more protracted, and was adjourned over four nights. In the course of the discussion it was soon known that the Radicals, however much they distrusted and disliked the Premier, would not put the Tories in office. Cobden explained once more the grounds of his opposition, but would not be a party to the overthrow of the Government. The consequence was, that on the 8th, when the division was taken, the vote of censure was rejected by 313 to 295. This majority was the full force of the united Liberal party, which had been decreased since the general election. It gave great encouragement to the Government, which, it was felt, would now see out the present Parliament, which had one more session to run. The Houses were prorogued on the 29th of July.

In the last session of a Parliament the nearness of a general election always produces some appearance of activity, and even the Palmerston Ministry was susceptible of impressions of this kind. So that the Queen's speech, delivered on the 7th of February, 1865, presented quite an array of subjects to be dealt with, instead of the single measure of 1864 and the

absolute silence of 1863. Certainly the list of matters referred to was not of a very exciting character, consisting as it did of the concentration of the courts of justice, the revision of the statute law, patents, poor law relief, and the reform of endowed schools. There was little in this to challenge controversy, and the addresses in reply were passed in both Houses without division.

The unhappy condition of Ireland, the distress which had caused the wholesale emigration, and the disaffection amounting to attempted rebellion which had resulted from it, forced upon the early attention of Parliament the two great questions by which the country was agitated. It was not yet understood in England how unjust and cruel it was to impose a land law on the Irish people which neither accorded with their sentiments nor recognized their fair proprietary rights. That the Act of 1860 had failed began to be admitted, but why it had failed was not so well known. A demand for inquiry, at least, could not be refused, and after some preliminary discussions and divisions had taken place, Mr. Maguire moved, on the 31st of March, for a select committee to inquire into the laws regulating the relations between landlords and tenants in Ireland, with a view to their more equitable adjustment. The resolution was seconded by Mr. W. E. Forster; but, on Palmerston's suggestion, the scope of the inquiry was narrowed to the result of the Act of 1860, and on that condition the committee was granted. The other Irish question which was once more taking its place in the region of active agitation, was that of the maintenance of an alien Church. On this point the Radicals again originated a discussion, which led to the taking by Mr. Gladstone of another step in the rapid progress of Liberalism on which he had entered. On the 28th of March Mr. Dillwyn moved a resolution—"That the present position of the Irish Church Establishment is unsatisfactory, and calls for the early attention of her Majesty's Government." In his speech on this motion Mr. Gladstone admitted that the position of the Church was unsatisfactory, but he could not support that part of the

resolution which called for the immediate attention, which ought to involve the immediate action, of the Government. This, however, was the beginning of the end; the subject, if touched at all, could be dealt with in one manner only. The debate on the resolution was adjourned, and was not resumed. In the meantime the usual remedy was applied to the Irish fever, a Peace Preservation Act being introduced. It was read a second time in the House of Commons on the 19th of June, by seventy-six votes to twenty-nine, and subsequently became law.

On the eve of an election discussions on reform were inevitable. Although there were constant assertions by the opponents of reform that there was no enthusiastic demand for it, yet every party in Parliament had acknowledged its justice and necessity, and the majority of the constituencies were in its favour. When Mr. Baines moved, on the 3rd of May, the second reading of his Borough Franchise Bill, it was supported by Sir George Grey on behalf of the Government, but on the 8th of May it was defeated by 288 to 214. It was a curious exhibition, the responsible Ministry declaring their opinion that one of the most serious steps which a nation could contemplate—that of amending the Constitution of the country—ought to be taken, and yet allowing the proposal to be rejected as a matter of course. On the 16th of June Berkeley's resolution on the ballot was defeated by 118 to 74.

Before either of these discussions had taken place, a voice was for ever silenced which could have spoken with power in favour of a concession of political justice to the people. Richard Cobden died on the 3rd of April, and the country lost one of the purest, wisest, and noblest statesmen who have ever devoted themselves to her service. He was the advocate of a foreign policy which would preserve an honourable peace, based upon a recognition of the rights of other nations. The treaty which he negotiated did not deal with the apportionment of spoils after a sanguinary contest, but provided for the friendly intercourse of two great nations on terms

conducive to their common interests. The commercial and financial policy of which he was a most eloquent defender aimed at improving the material conditions of the great body of the people. He was the champion of a system of national education of the broadest and freest kind, and of thorough religious freedom, the love of which did not spring from indifference, but from deep conviction. He saw clearly the necessity of an alteration of those land laws which, artificially built up for the social and political benefit of a class, have divorced the people from the soil, and kept one half of the population of the country in a state of inferiority and subservience. And he was far-seeing enough to know that all the great objects for which he was contending could only be obtained, and could only produce their natural results, by a political enfranchisement which would give to all classes of his countrymen a full and free voice in the government of the nation. In Cobden Radicalism found a mouthpiece which could express and defend its noblest aspirations, and could justify its policy to the country and the world.

No one, of course, expected any practical work to be effected at the end of this session, and on the 27th of June Palmerston announced that the prorogation would take place on the 6th of July. Immediately before that time the Ministry sustained another loss, or at least the resignation of another of its members. The scandal about the Leeds Bankruptcy Court, in which the Lord Chancellor's son was implicated in transactions affecting his appointment to an office in the House of Lords, led to an inquiry by a select committee. The report presented, whilst acquitting the Lord Chancellor of any charge except that of haste and want of caution, yet declared that there were circumstances calculated to excite the gravest suspicions, and that the inquiry was highly desirable for the public interests. No one said that Lord Westbury was guilty of personal corruption, but it was evident that his imprudence made his retention of the highest legal office impossible, and on the

5th of July he resigned. On the following day Parliament was prorogued and dissolved.

The general election which took place immediately was not a very exciting affair. The masters of the constituencies, the landowners, Whig and Tory alike, were anxious not to raise any troublesome questions, and agreed to support Palmerston as the great preventive of change. In that case it did not much matter whether the nominal Liberal majority was a little greater or a little less; the Premier was to be retained in office in either case. The large popular constituencies gave evidence of their continued desire for reform, and in some cases made the Ministry feel the effect of their discontent. Thus Sir Charles Wood had to leave Halifax, which required a more independent Liberal; and Frederick Peel was dismissed from Bury, to make way for a good Radical in the person of Mr. R. M. Phillips. An important addition was made to the ranks of the party by the election for Westminster of John Stuart Mill. The action of such a man was a fresh refutation of the charge that Radicals were mere thoughtless demagogues, without a knowledge of the great principles on which the government of a country should be founded. Here was a man who had deeply studied the laws of political economy and the philosophy of society and politics, and who, as the result of his knowledge and thought, was convinced that the safest foundation for national well-being was the extension of the area of popular representation. It is probable that a nominal loss of one election was as great a real benefit to the cause as the gain of several others. The University of Oxford, by its rejection of Mr. Gladstone, only showed, as far as it was itself concerned, that it hated anything like sympathy with popular desires or support of popular measures. But as respected its late representative, it set him free from that desire to represent even the prejudices of his old constituents, which, if it could not affect the growth of his political opinions or the sincerity of his convictions, might hamper and impede his practical progress. The sense of relief from this indefinite but real restraint was not absent from his own mind, as some

of his addresses to the electors of South Lancashire proved ; but it was more distinctly felt and more openly expressed by Liberal politicians of all sections, and especially by those of the most advanced school.

The general result of the elections was to increase the Liberal majority, and to strengthen the position of the minister. The *Times* calculated that the Liberal gains were fifty-seven, and the losses thirty-three, showing an increase of twenty-four, equal to forty-eight on a division. The full numbers it gave as—Liberals, 367 ; Conservatives, 290, or a majority of seventy-seven.* McCalmont's "Poll Book" gives—Liberals, 361 ; Conservatives, 294 ; majority, 67. Either of these totals would show a good working majority, and if it had been a victory gained on clear political lines, there would have been ample means in the hands of the Government to secure a sound progressive policy. Unfortunately, this was not the case ; a considerable number of the majority were Liberal only to the extent of preventing the accession to power of the Conservatives, and were prepared to check any active reform legislation. To this extent the party was Palmerstonian rather than Liberal, a fact which soon became painfully evident.† For the master into whose hands the new Parliament was willing to place almost unrestricted power, was fated never to exercise it. Palmerston died on the 18th of October, and his death closed the period of political compromise and inaction. There was now to be that conflict of opinions which is the sign of real national life, and it was a contest which, whatever might be the result of the first campaign, could end only in one of two ways, either in the victory of Radical principles or in national weakness and decay.

* The *Times*, July 25, 1865.

† There were, however, nearly 170 members who had never sat before, and who were to some extent untried. Many of these were Radicals, among them being Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Fawcett, and Mr. Samuel Morley.

CHAPTER XIX.

FROM THE DEATH OF PALMERSTON TO THE PASSING OF
THE REFORM ACT (1865-1867)—CONCLUSION.

IT was generally felt that the death of Palmerston closed the truce which had existed between Conservatism and Radicalism during his tenure of office. Both parties hesitated to attack the minister, in whom neither believed, and who, in fact, seemed to have no deep political convictions of any sort. It was a pause before battle, which both sides had been willing to prolong, but which now came to an end. Those timid politicians who called themselves Liberals, but dreaded reform, had to decide upon a definite course of action, and many of them chose to go over to the Tories in the struggle which was now commenced. In this they were as foolish as they were cowardly, and what they succeeded in doing was to defeat the moderate measure of reform which the Ministry offered, and which the Radicals were willing to accept, and by so doing to arouse a spirit of determination in the country, before which their temporary combinations were scattered, and on the strength of which the popular wishes were more thoroughly carried out.

The new Ministry, which was now formed by Russell, consisted mainly of the same men who had composed the last, but it was known that there was a great difference in its spirit and intentions. Some indication of the change of feeling was given by the appointment of Mr. Stansfeld and Mr. Forster to office. The great alteration, however, was the substitution of Mr. Gladstone for Lord Palmerston as leader of the House of

Commons ; of a statesman for a political manager ; of a man who “made a conscience of his work” for one who was content to take what came, and to change his opinions with a change of fortune.

Parliament met on the 1st of February, 1866, and the preliminary business having been gone through, the Queen’s speech was delivered on the 6th of the same month. When that speech was read, it was known that the reform contest had really begun. It said that information as to the right of voting was being prepared, and that when it was complete the attention of Parliament would be called to it, “with a view to such improvements in the laws which regulate the rights of voting in the election of members of the House of Commons as may tend to strengthen our free institutions and conduce to the public welfare.” As much as this had been said before ; but now it was known that the matter must go beyond speaking, and it was soon announced that ministers meant to stake their existence on the success of their proposal. They would fulfil their promise to the country or resign. The history of this short Parliament is mainly the record of the struggle of privilege and prejudice against popular rights—successful for a time, but inevitably doomed to ultimate defeat.

There was a difference not only in the spirit shown by ministers, but in the tone of the House of Commons. In nothing was this more marked than in the position taken by, and the attention paid to, the Radical leaders. In the case of Mr. Bright this took the shape of constant attacks by the Whig and Conservative allies. For some time past the member for Birmingham had been arousing and directing a popular agitation in favour of reform. At first he was sneered at for attempting an impossible task—he was whipping a dead horse ; he was piping with no one to dance. Now there was a change in the accusation, and he was charged with exciting the passions of the people and leading them on to a violent onslaught upon the Constitution. He was setting class against class ; he was Americanizing our institutions ; he was endangering the throne ; he was doing all kinds of

terrible and indefinable things. The ridiculous pertinacity of these attacks was rebuked in the House of Commons by Mr. Baxter, who said "he might be permitted to say, at the same time, that he hoped the discussion would be allowed to go on without any more personal and monotonous attacks upon the honourable member for Birmingham. He was sure the country was tired of these incessant personal references. The other day he met a gentleman who was constantly in the habit of attending the debates in that House, and who entirely differed from the honourable member for Birmingham in politics; and he (Mr. Baxter) asked why he had not appeared lately in the gallery. He replied, 'You people in the House of Commons seem to be doing nothing but discuss John Bright, and I am quite sick of it.'"^{*} The fact which lay at the bottom of all this abuse was, that the subject of it represented a depth of public opinion which was dangerous to all obstructives, and which gave to his actions an importance not to be denied and a power, which could not long be resisted. Mr. Mill, even on his entrance into Parliament, spoke with unquestioned authority, which was in the first place due to his fame as a thinker and writer, but was soon increased by the thoroughness of his principles and the force of his advocacy. There were many other members of the party who vindicated its influence in Parliament, and altogether its position became more in accordance with its strength in the country than it had been before.

The introduction of the promised Reform Bill was delayed by the discussion of two other subjects which had been referred to in the Queen's speech, the ravages of the cattle plague in England, and the Fenian Rebellion in Ireland. With regard to the Irish troubles, the old short and easy method was of necessity adopted, but on this occasion it was applied with unwonted rapidity. An Act to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland passed through all its stages in both Houses of Parliament in a single day, Saturday, the 17th of February, the sitting of the Lords being prolonged into the Sunday to

^{*} Speech in the House on the second reading of the Reform Bill, April 13.

complete the business. Mr. Bright and Mill, whilst not opposing the bill, spoke in the strongest terms about the necessity of some legislation to remove the grievances which had been the cause of the disturbance. Parliament, however, was in no such great haste as to remedies, and although a Tenant Right Bill was introduced by the Government and read a second time, the ministerial crisis prevented its adoption. On the motion for second reading, Mill impressed upon the House in a most striking manner that difference in the customs and traditions on the land question between England and Ireland, without a recognition of which no just legislation for the latter country could be carried, and no permanent tranquillity and prosperity insured.

There were not wanting signs that Parliament would be called upon, and would be ready, to consider many of those social questions on which the Radicals were desirous of making progress. On the 12th of February the Government introduced a bill for improving the dwellings of the labouring classes through the instrumentality of local authorities. On the 13th Mr. Fawcett opened the question of education in manufacturing towns; and on the 7th of March the Church Rates Abolition Bill was, on the motion of Mr. Hardcastle, read a second time. Attention to all other subjects was, however, rendered feeble and distracted by the thought of what was to be done on the great question of reform. A sort of preliminary experiment was made by Mr. Clay, who, on the 20th of February, introduced a bill for the creation of a new franchise as a result of an educational examination.

The real business began a little later. On the 1st of March Mr. Gladstone gave notice that on the 12th he would move for leave to bring in a Reform Bill. On the day named he rose to explain the Government proposals. These were very simple, and dealt with the franchise only, redistribution being left for a special bill to be submitted in the following year. The county franchise was to be extended to occupiers of property of £14 rental, which was supposed to be equal to about £12 rental. Adult male depositors in savings-

banks of £50 and upwards were to have votes for the place in which they resided. The qualification for the borough franchise was to be £7 rental, and lodgers occupying rooms of the annual value of £10, exclusive of furniture, were to have votes. Moderate as these proposals were, they encountered the opposition not only of the Conservatives, but of a considerable section of the Whigs. Mr. Horsman, Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Laing hastened to attack the bill and the Ministry, and that combination was formed to which Mr. Bright at once gave the appropriate and enduring name, the "Cave of Adullam." The Radicals, on the other hand, gave the measure a hearty support, although it was less extensive than propositions which had previously been accepted by the large majority of Liberals. In this they showed their political wisdom, their moderation commending them to an increased following in the country, whilst the short-sightedness of the "Cave" was shown when their present obstruction led in the following year to the adoption of a scheme much more democratic. Their virulence and rancour were equal to their folly, and night after night they made attacks upon the character of their countrymen and the stability of the Government. Amid the enthusiastic cheers of the Tories, these men speaking from the Liberal benches, declared that the majority of the people of England were unfit, from selfishness and ignorance, to be entrusted with a voice in the management of their own affairs, and that the Ministry which offered to enfranchise even a few of them was unworthy of the support of Parliament. Once more the Radicals proved themselves to be not only the truest representatives of the national will, but the soundest practical statesmen.

The discussion on the motion for leave to introduce the bill was adjourned to the 13th, when, after further debate, it was carried without a division, and the second reading was fixed for the 12th of April. The first formal attack upon the bill was made by a member of one of the great Whig families, and seconded by the son of the late Conservative Premier. A

more striking proof of the determination of the privileged classes, to whichever political party they belonged, to combine to secure the interests of their own order could not well be given. When the second reading was moved, on the 12th of April, Earl Grosvenor proposed, and Lord Stanley seconded, an amendment declaring that it was inexpedient for the House to consider the bill for the reduction of the franchise until it had before it the whole scheme of the Government for the amendment of the representation of the people. The discussion was not limited to the avowed object of the amendment, Mr. Lowe and other Adullamites opposing any change in the constitution of the House. For eight nights the debate went on, the excitement constantly increasing, and on the 27th of April Mr. Gladstone closed it in a speech of remarkable power. In concluding his oration, he told the opposition on both sides that their efforts must ultimately fail, even if they gained a temporary advantage. "You cannot fight against the future," he said. "Time is on our side. The great social forces which move on in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb—these great social forces are against you ; they are marshalled on our side ; and the banner which we now carry, though perhaps at some moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the eye of heaven, and it will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not-distant victory." This was the spirit of true Radicalism, this belief in great principles, this trust in the people and in their future. It was scorned at the time by the tricky politicians of the one side and the conceited pedants of the other ; but the Tories and their tools found, in a very short time, that the forces at which the one laughed and the other trembled were indeed too strong for them. The division on Earl Grosvenor's amendment showed a majority of only five for the Government, the numbers being 318 to 313. The strength of the Liberal secession was shown in this result. There voted for the Government, including the

tellers, 318 Liberals and two Conservatives; against them, 282 Conservatives and 33 Liberals.*

The closeness of the figures was received, of course, by the opposition with great delight, and Mr. Gladstone took time to consider what course the Government would pursue in consequence. On the 30th of April the decision was announced. Although their majority was so small, ministers did not think it consistent with their duty to abandon the bill; but after so many members had expressed their opinion that redistribution should be dealt with, they intended to accept the necessity and introduce their plan. This was done on the 7th of May. The proposal was to obtain forty-nine seats for distribution, by withdrawing one member each from all boroughs having a population under 8000, and by grouping certain boroughs which had now separate representation into sixteen constituencies, some with one and some with two members. The forty-nine members were to be allotted—twenty-six to English counties, fifteen to English boroughs, one to London University, and seven to Scotland. Four of the English borough members were to be given to increase the representation of existing constituencies, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds each obtaining one.

This scheme, although not very complete, was accepted by the Radicals, whose desire was to bring the matter to some practical conclusion; but it was opposed by those who objected to reform of any kind. The part which was disliked

* The following are the names of the Liberal deserters :—

Agar-Ellis, Hon. L.	Doulton, F.	Lowe, Rt. Hon. R.
Andover, Visct.	Duff, R. W.	Mackie, J.
Anson, Major	Dunkellin, Lord	Mainwaring, T.
Baring, H. B.	Elcho, Lord	M'Kenna, J. N.
Beaumont, W. B.	Fitzwilliam, Hon. C.	Marsh, H. H.
Bruce, Lord E.	Gregory, W. H.	Packe, Col.
Bulkeley, Sir R.	Grosvenor, Earl	Pim, Jonathan
Brecknock, Earl of	Grosvenor, Lord R.	Saunderson, E.
Carington, Hon. C.	Heathcote, Hon. G.	Stock, Osborne
Clinton, Lord Arthur	Horsman, Rt. Hon. E.	Tomline, Geo.
Crosland, Col.	Laing, Samuel	Tracey, Hon. C. H.

The two Conservatives who voted with ministers were R. J. Harvey and Sir G. Bowyer.

was that which struck at the proprietary influence in the small boroughs which were to be grouped. Many of these places were as much the appanage of territorial houses as were the close boroughs disfranchised by the first Reform Act. It was likely, therefore, that the alliance which had been so nearly successful against the Franchise Bill would be doubly energetic on this point. The Redistribution Bill was read a second time on the 14th of May, and on the 28th the two measures were referred to the same committee. On the motion that the Speaker leave the chair, for the House to go into committee, Captain Hayter moved—"That in the opinion of this House the system of grouping proposed by Government is neither convenient nor equitable, nor sufficiently matured to form the basis of a satisfactory measure." During the debate, it became so evident that the landed interests on both sides of the House would be too strong for ministers that Mr. Gladstone had to declare that the principle of grouping was not vital to the bill. This was enough, and the amendment, which its mover wished to withdraw, was rejected by 403 votes to 2.

The bills were now in committee, where the opposition would have increased means of resistance and obstruction, and they soon gave evidence of their intention to make use of them. On the 7th of June Lord Stanley moved the postponement of the franchise clauses until redistribution had been considered, but was beaten by 287 to 260. The crucial point was now reached. On the 11th of June Ward Hunt moved that the county franchise should be based on rating instead of rental. This amendment was debated for two nights, and the division taken on the 14th showed—for the amendment, 273; against it, 280, giving Government a majority of seven only. This vote, given on a subject which the Ministry had declared to be of the very essence of the bill, encouraged the seceding Liberals and presaged the defeat of the measure. The end came on the 18th of June, when Lord Dunkellin, a professed Liberal, opened the same question with regard to boroughs which had been raised by Hunt in respect to counties. He moved that, in describing the new borough franchise, the word

“rateable” should be used instead of “clear yearly.” This was carried by 315 to 304, and the Reform Bill and the Government were at once destroyed. On this occasion forty-four Liberals had voted against the Ministry, and only one Conservative for them.* On the 19th, Earl Russell and Mr. Gladstone informed the Houses that ministers had resigned.

The victory had been gained by the combined enemies of reform, but before it was well completed those who were most interested knew that it would prove fruitless. The desperate defenders of privilege, the Grosvenors and Dunkellins, the freelances, the Lowes and Horsmans, might be willing to fight for the retention of the position which had been gained; but those who were called to power, and who would be responsible for the conduct of affairs, knew that no government could be carried on which did not accept the necessity for reform. For that overwhelming public opinion, for the expression of which the opponents of progress had called, and which they had boasted did not exist, now manifested itself in a form not to be mistaken. There had been an absence of great demonstrations before, not, as was now seen, because the people were indifferent, but because, all parties in Parliament being pledged to reform, there was a reasonable hope that justice would be obtained without agitation. That hope had been rudely shattered, and now, convinced that they could only succeed by their own action, the people “took the matter into their own hands, and showed in an unmistakable manner, both to friends and foes, that they were thoroughly in earnest.”† The agitation which was immediately commenced had three great elements of success. It had a definite object, about which there was no division

* Some few Liberals who had voted for Earl Grosvenor did not support Lord Dunkellin, but the following additions were made to the list of the deserters :—

Biddulph, Col.	Dering, Sir E.	Heneage, E.
Blennerhasset, R.	Finlay, A. S.	MacEvoy, E.
Browne, Lord J.	Foley, H. W.	Peel, Sir R.
Cholmeley, Sir M.	Foster, W. O.	Pritchard, J.
Clinton, Lord E.	Goldsmid, J.	Sheridan, R. B.

† Molesworth's *History of England from 1830 to 1874*, vol. iii. p. 289.

of opinion. It had competent and trusted leaders: at the meeting in London, in Trafalgar Square, on the 29th of June, the rallying cry was "Gladstone and Liberty," and at most of the great demonstrations which followed in all parts of the country, resolutions were passed giving the warmest and most grateful thanks to Gladstone, Bright, and Mill, and declaring "confidence in the honesty and ability of Mr. Bright to champion the people's cause in Parliament during the coming Parliamentary struggle." * And thirdly, the agitation had behind it the enthusiasm of the vast mass of the population, increased by a sense of injury and injustice. The meetings were larger than had ever before been known. At Birmingham, on the 27th of August, 200,000 people met on Brookfields; at Manchester, on the 24th of September, between 100,000 and 200,000 were present at Campfield; and at Leeds over 100,000 assembled at Woodhouse Moor.

The event which caused the most alarm took place in London on the 23rd of July. A great reform demonstration had been announced by the Reform League, to be held in Hyde Park on that day. The Home Secretary and the police authorities decided that the meeting should not be held in the park. The originators of the affair resolved that the processions should march to the park as arranged, and, if refused admission, should adjourn to Trafalgar Square. When the vast concourse reached the park the gates were closed, and in resisting the attempted entrance by the people the police used their staves. There was great excitement, and the crowd, refused access by the gates, pulled down the railings in many places, and, after a considerable conflict with the police, rushed into the park and held their meetings. The violence used was really an accident, caused by the foolish policy of closing the park in so arbitrary a manner; and that no serious disturbance was either intended or was likely to follow was shown by the peaceful close of the proceedings. But all the same there was widespread alarm amongst the classes who had resisted reform, and a feeling

* *Annual Register*, 1866, pp. 137, 143, 162.

manifested as though a rebellion were impending. The people who had refused to believe in the national demand because it was urged without violence, were panic-stricken when their challenge for agitation was accepted.

The effect of these outside proceedings was soon felt in Parliament. The Earl of Derby formed a new Cabinet, and the first time he spoke in the House of Lords, which was on the 9th of July, when the excitement was only beginning, he hastened to declare that he was not opposed to reform. He would not pledge himself to bring in a bill immediately, but he could not deny that there were practical anomalies in our representative system, and nothing would give him greater pleasure than to see a large increase in the number of electors, and a considerable infusion of persons who were now excluded from the representation. Disraeli spoke in the same strain when he addressed his constituents. This was cold comfort to the men who had deserted their old party for the sake of preventing reform, which was now as inevitable as before. The Ministry formed by Lord Derby was purely Conservative. He made overtures again to some of the moderate Whigs, and especially to the Adullamites, but with no success; and had to meet Parliament with a Cabinet taken entirely from the party which was in a minority in the House of Commons. His position was very peculiar. On all questions which, apart from constitutional change, affected practical administration, the Liberals would be united and would outnumber the Conservatives, and on the subjects on which some of the Whigs would help them ministers were unable to make a stand. Fortunately, the session was nearly at an end, and some months were before them in which they could consider and mature their policy. Several important measures had to be withdrawn, among them Mr. Gladstone's proposals for the reduction of the national debt and the bill to amend the Irish land laws. One subject, however, was carried a stage further after the resignation of the Russell Cabinet, and that served to show on what lines the Liberals would act together. On the 18th

of July Mr. Gladstone moved the second reading of the Compulsory Church Rates Abolition Bill. It was evident that the bill could not be carried during the session, and on that ground its opponents urged its withdrawal. On such a question, however, a declaration of principle was desirable, and, after an adjournment, the second reading was carried on the 1st of August, with the understanding that no further progress should be made. It must have been an unpleasant thought for the Conservative Ministry, that they could not resist an attack upon the Church of which they were the sworn champions. The necessary routine work being got through, the session closed on the 10th of August.

During the recess the education of the Ministry went on, the lessons being given in every part of the country, and the reform agitation extending in all directions. The Hyde Park railings had been pulled down before the prorogation, but the other great demonstrations to which reference has been made now followed each other in rapid succession. The movement was everywhere joined by people who do not usually take an active part in political agitation, but who, convinced now that nothing could be done in the way of permanent legislation until the reform question was disposed of, united in a demand for its settlement. These men, too, saw plainly that Mr. Bright, instead of being the firebrand which he was called by the Whigs, was in reality a statesman who had first seen the true remedy for existing evils, and had manifested as much wisdom in his methods as courage in his advocacy of them. In the course of this agitation, he had secured for himself and his party that full assurance of popular confidence which made it not only possible, but imperative, that he and they should take a prominent and influential part in the responsible government of the country.

Parliament met on the 5th of February, 1867, and it was soon seen that the agitation had done its work. The Ministry which had come into power by the rejection of a Reform Bill, and which in July was not prepared to commit itself to a promise to introduce a measure of its own, now in February

informed Parliament, in the Queen's speech, that its attention would again be called to the state of the representation of the people, and the hope was expressed that its deliberations, "conducted in a spirit of moderation and mutual forbearance, may lead to the adoption of measures which, without unduly disturbing the balance of political power, shall freely extend the elective franchise." That this determination was occasioned by pressure from without, and was not the result of the conscientious convictions of the Cabinet, was scarcely concealed. The ministers, indeed, did not pretend even then to have arrived at any definite opinion as to the advance which was to be made. Their action declared, as plainly as any words could have done, that they were ready to make any concession to the popular demand which was shown to be inevitable, and instead of submitting any distinct proposals of their own, they invited Parliament to declare, in the shape of a series of resolutions, how far it considered that the nation desired to be carried. For themselves, they would not refuse to be the medium of carrying out the wishes of the country, and desired that at the outset it might be understood that the success or failure of any particular measure should not affect the existence of the Administration.

The royal speech announced the intention to deal with two other pressing questions—the land law of Ireland and the relation between workmen and masters. These promises, together with the statement that the condition of Ireland would allow of the cessation of exceptional laws for the preservation of order, made up a speech to which no objection could be taken by Liberals, and the address was unanimously adopted. In speaking in the debate on the address, Disraeli gave notice that he intended, early in the following week, to state to the House the course which the Government proposed to take on the subject of reform.

In accordance with this notice, the Chancellor of the Exchequer rose on the 11th of February to explain the intentions of ministers. He proposed to lay upon the table a series of thirteen resolutions, to which he invited the con-

sideration of the House—as it was, he maintained, Parliament rather than the Ministry which was committed to the subject of reform, and was bound, therefore, to make known its views as the foundation of an acceptable measure. He did not think that this was a question which should determine the fate of Cabinets, and the House, therefore, might with the greater freedom be invited to express its opinion. The course proposed was not flattering to themselves, but they considered it more honourable to take a part, however humble, in the settlement of this controversy, than to bring in a mock measure which party spirit would not allow to pass. He would, on the 25th, move that the House go into committee to consider the resolutions. The exceedingly ingenious proposition that Parliament should itself dictate the provisions of a Bill, which the Cabinet would then register, was not accepted. The House evidently intended, in a very free spirit, to deal with the subject, but preferred to have a Government bill to alter rather than to prepare one by means of resolutions.

This was more trying to the Ministry than was generally known, for at the very time when the discussion was taking place they had not agreed upon even the broad principles of a bill. They had, in fact, two outlines before them, one of which the leaders would prefer to accept, and another which, in deference to the feelings of their weaker brethren, they were prepared to submit. This extraordinary position was explained, with engaging frankness, first by Sir John Pakington to his constituents, and afterwards by various ministers in Parliament. The statement was to be made on the 25th of February, and on the 23rd the Cabinet supposed that it had resolved to bring in the wider of the two schemes. One member, General Peel, expressed strong objections to the measure, but waived those objections. After the meeting, however, Lord Cranbourne and Lord Carnarvon found that they could not accept the bill, and sent in their resignations. Suddenly another Cabinet had to be called, and Sir John explained the wonderful proceedings which followed. They

all knew, he said, that on the 23rd of February a Cabinet Council decided on the Reform Bill which was to be proposed to Parliament. On Monday, the 25th, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Lord Derby was to address the whole Conservative party in Downing Street. At half-past four in the afternoon of that day—he mentioned the hour because it was important—the Chancellor of the Exchequer was to explain the Reform Bill in the House of Commons. On the Monday, between eleven and twelve o'clock, he received an urgent summons to attend a Cabinet Council at half-past twelve. He was punctual, but so sudden had been the call that it was nearly half-past one before all the members could be got together. Then they were told that Lord Cranbourne and Lord Carnarvon had seceded, objecting to the details of the bill which it was thought they had adopted on Saturday. What was to be done? It was then past two, and Lord Derby was to address the party at half-past. Literally, they had not half an hour; they had not even more than ten minutes to make up their minds. In those ten minutes they decided to change the mode of dealing with the English Constitution, to withdraw the larger bill, and submit to Parliament a milder measure, which it was hoped that the seceders would accept.*

It was this famous ten-minutes bill which Disraeli rose to explain, but not definitely to introduce, on the memorable 25th of February. It was proposed to create four new franchises—first, educational, including persons who had taken a degree, and ministers of religion; second, savings-bank depositors of £30 for one year; third, holders of £50 in public funds; and fourth, persons paying twenty shillings a year in direct taxation. The occupancy franchise for boroughs to be £6 ratable, and for counties, £20 ratable. The redistribution plan was to disfranchise four corrupt boroughs returning seven members, and to take one member each from twenty-three small boroughs having a population under 7000, and to apportion the seats so obtained in the following manner:—Twelve new boroughs one member each, Tower Hamlets to be divided—each

* *Annual Register*, 1867, p. 31.

division to have two members, London University one, and the remainder to counties. There was a debate which was adjourned to the 28th, but before that time, Disraeli announced the intention of the Government to withdraw the resolutions, and to bring in a bill. Before that could be done, however, a ministerial catastrophe occurred. Lord Cranbourne and Lord Carnarvon found that their impulse had carried them beyond their reason in allowing them to accept the moderate bill of their colleagues, and so they resigned. On this General Peel was released from his unwilling assent, and all three retired from the Cabinet. The causes which led to the crisis, and the policy of the Government, were explained and discussed in the House of Commons on the 4th and 5th of March, and on the last-named evening Mr. Bright reminded the House that he had always said that household suffrage was the true suffrage for boroughs, and urged the Ministry to deal with the working classes in a generous and liberal spirit.

Such a secession as that which had now taken place might have done more injury to a stronger Cabinet than it did to that of Lord Derby. There was no ministerial majority in the Commons to be affected by it, and the forbearance of Liberals, by which the Government existed, was likely to be increased rather than diminished by such an event. Certainly the prospect of obtaining a good reform bill was brighter than before, on account of that greater dependence upon the opposition which had been caused by the resignations. Ministers at once reverted to the more extensive scheme which they had modified with a view of conciliating Cranbourne and Carnarvon. How extensive it was to be really made, they had themselves no idea ; but they were prepared for "a leap in the dark," * and trusted to fortune and the Liberals for a safe landing-place. On the 18th of March the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced the second and final bill, final in title, but destined to be essentially altered in its progress through Parliament. The principal difference between this

* Lord Derby's speech in the House of Lords, on the 6th of August, on the third reading of the bill.

second measure and the first was in the qualification for the borough and county franchise, which was now to be a £15 rental in counties, and in boroughs household suffrage, accompanied by personal payment of rates and two years' residence. This last provision, Disraeli estimated, would admit 230,000 men who lived in houses under £10 and paid rates, leaving unenfranchised 486,000 householders. The fancy franchises were left as before, and a parson, a tax-payer, a bank-depositor, or a stockholder, was to have an additional vote if he was also a householder. The old distribution scheme was also retained.

In the contest which was waged over the different stages of this bill, the efforts of the Radicals were directed to remove the restrictions by which the extension of the suffrage was hampered and limited ; to reject the fancy franchises ; and to widen the system of redistribution. With regard to the first and most important point, there were two methods of proceeding. The best plan would be the simple one advocated by Mr. Bright, of giving household suffrage pure and simple, unaccompanied by any restrictions as to rating or otherwise. It is a tribute to the foresight and wisdom of the Radical party that, after all the trouble and struggles and arrangements to avoid it, this proposal had to be ultimately adopted, the tricks and trammels all proving unworkable. Failing this clear and definite system, there was another possible plan, which was to fix a line of rental below which there should be no rating, and above which all occupiers should have votes. This was the plan which Mr. Gladstone supported, and it was accepted by a meeting of Liberals held at his house on the 5th of April. It would have been proposed on behalf of the party by Mr. Coleridge, but for the outbreak of another mutiny in the ranks. The great "Tea-room Conspiracy" destroyed the chance of successful action, and gave increased courage to the Ministry. The bill had been read a second time on the 27th of March, and it was upon the motion for going into committee that Coleridge's amendment was to have been moved. In his speech on the second reading, Disraeli had given

indication of the readiness of the Government to accept almost any changes which the majority of the House might insist upon, and in committee their powers of compliance were severely tested.

The main battle raged round the compound householder, the man whose rates were paid through the landlord. It was this arrangement which would disfranchise two-thirds of the small householders to whom the bill made a nominal offer of votes; and it was this which the wisest men on both sides the House, Mr. Henley as well as Mr. Bright, knew would be regarded as a mockery by the people, and must lead to further agitation. On the 11th of April Mr. Gladstone proposed the only reasonable solution, in moving that the householder should vote, "whether he in person or his landlord be rated to the relief of the poor." This plan, which was to be adopted after a long process of discussion in the House, and of popular suffering and trouble outside, was now defeated. The debate was adjourned to the 12th, when, on a division, the amendment was lost, the numbers being 310 to 289. Once more Liberal seceders had destroyed the chance of a wise solution, and had weakened the leaders of their party. Other attempts were made to deal with the question. Mr. Hibbert moved that the householder should be admitted by paying the composition, and not the full rate; but this was negatived by 322 to 256. At last the difficulty was removed by the rough and ready process of abolishing compounding for rates altogether. In this manner was the franchise forced upon thousands of workmen, accompanied by a heavy penalty both in money and convenience, which was soon seen to be absolutely intolerable, and had to be removed in the first session of the new Parliament.*

For the time, however, this great difficulty was shelved, and the other parts of the bill were freely dealt with. The fancy

* As an example of the effect of this Act, it may be mentioned that the poor rate in Birmingham of October, 1867, led to 25,000 poor persons being summoned for the rate; and that of February, 1868, to 15,000 summonses and 5000 distress warrants.

franchises went, the two years' residence was altered to one year, voting papers were discarded, the county franchise qualification was lowered from £15 to £12 occupancy, and the system of redistribution was very largely extended. One triumph the political pedants enabled the Tory Peers to obtain, against even the wishes of the leader of the House of Commons: the three-cornered voting process was established, whereby, in all important divisions affecting the existence of Governments and the policy of the nation, Manchester, with 53,000 electors, can give one clear vote, and Tiverton, with 1400 electors, gives two votes. With all its merits and shortcomings the bill was passed, and it received the royal assent on the 15th of August.

The operation of the Reform Act of 1867 made an important alteration in the position and power of the Radical party. The gains which have accrued to the Liberals since 1868 have been made in the borough constituencies, where alone the Radical feelings of the people can obtain expression. There is now, both in Parliament and in the Cabinet, an absolute equality, if not in numbers, at least in influence, between the Radical and the Whig sections of the Liberal party. This improved state of things is the result not of any sudden impulse, but of the natural development and growth of the political life of the country. It is true that the later stages of that development have appeared to be more rapid than some of the earlier ones, but they are just as natural for all that. The action of general laws can often be best traced in the history of individuals, and the career of Mr. Gladstone illustrates the progress of Radicalism in its later phases. Step by step he has gone on giving effect to Liberal principles, and increasing his knowledge of, and therefore his trust in, the masses of his countrymen. That the present Premier is ready to work in perfect harmony with his Radical colleagues, and to allow them their legitimate influence in the councils of the nation, need not be said. Only on such conditions would Mr. Bright have become a member of Mr. Gladstone's first Cabinet, or Mr. Chamberlain or Sir Charles Dilke of his second.

Opportunities have thus been afforded to the country to learn that it can rely not only upon the political principles, but on the administrative ability, of the Radicals. The result in practical legislation has amply justified the expectations which were formed. During the comparatively short time in which the united Liberals have been in office, since the Reform Act increased the Radical power, every department of national life—religious, social, commercial, industrial, and intellectual—has been invigorated and improved. The Irish Church has been disestablished. The churchyards of England have been made national instead of sectarian property. A system of national education has been created, and the national universities have been widened and popularized. The land laws of Ireland have been remodelled, by which the injustice of ages has been removed, and the foundation for national peace and unity has been laid. The laws affecting the combination of workmen have been changed, the relations between employer and employed have been placed upon fair and equitable terms, and protection has been given to the lives of the men. The army has been made national by the abolition of purchase. The game laws have been amended ; and the law of landlord and tenant improved by the recognition of the tenants' right in the improvement of their holdings. The protection of the ballot has been given to electors. Trade has been purified by the adoption of a sound bankruptcy law. A nearer approach to absolute freedom of commerce has been secured, and the last remains of the old corn law removed. There are, perhaps, none of these great works in which some defects may not be pointed out, which have been the result of a compromise, avowed or understood, between the two sections of the party, but in all of them is to be found the spirit of Radical policy and the ability of Radical statesmanship.

These later triumphs are only the legitimate realization of hopes founded on old struggles carried on by the pioneers of political progress. For more than a century the way had been pointed out to all practical reforms by the advocacy of Radicals, before the indifference of Whigs and the opposi-

tion of Tories were overcome. Yet, even after accepting the policy of the Radicals, it had been the custom of the governing classes to assume that outside of the narrow limits of their circle, the country could not look for men to direct its action and carry on its government. Radicals might originate, but Whigs and Tories must administer. That assumption is to a great extent dispelled, and a practical equality is now admitted. But in such a case equality can only exist on the condition that something more is possible. No party can permanently maintain such a position in the government of a great country unless it can, on the necessity arising, undertake to govern alone.

This is a position which, especially since the passing of the Franchise Act of 1884, the Radical party will be justified in occupying. They have a definite policy, both in home and foreign affairs, they possess a number of skilled politicians and administrators, and all they want is that very steady cohesion which can be acquired only by the consciousness of power and the opportunity of effective action. It does not follow that this power of separate action need be exercised; the demonstration that it exists may be sufficient for the purpose. The Liberal party always has been, and probably always will be, composed of men differing to some extent as to the rate of progress which should be made in the direction in which all desire to go. If it is no longer desirable that all its movements should be directed by the section which is least advanced, it does not follow that the counsels of men who call themselves moderate should not be listened to. What is essential is that any Government which is constituted should be in accord with the opinions and wishes of the majority of the people. As this ground-root of representative institutions forms the very essence of Radicalism, it is certain that Radicals ought to be prepared to give it effect by accepting the responsibilities and exercising the powers of government. It is at once a blessing and a glory to our country that, on the one hand, peaceful and legitimate means have been devised for the admission to power of the advanced intelligence of the

time ; and that, on the other hand, as the result of generations of efforts, a party has been formed and educated and strengthened until it is able to give effect to the national will without violent changes of social and political ideas, but in full conformity with the laws which govern the actions, shape the policy, and determine the destinies of states.

APPENDIX.



A LIST of the Members returned in the General Elections of 1832 and 1835, who are entered in Henry Stook Smith's "PARLIAMENTS OF ENGLAND" as Radicals, with the names of the places for which they sat.

1832.

John Ramsbottom	...	...	...	Windsor.
John Horatio Lloyd	...	...	...	Stockport.
Sir William Molesworth, Bart.	...	...	...	Cornwall (East Division).
James Kennedy	...	...	..	Tiverton.
Joseph Hume	...	...	...	Middlesex.
Daniel W. Harvey	...	...	...	Colchester.
J. C. Hobhouse	...	...	...	Westminster.
Sir F. Burdett	...	...	...	"
Lieut.-Col. G. Williams	...	...	...	Ashton-under-Lyne.
John Fielden	..	...	...	Oldham.
William Cobbett	...	...	...	"
Sir W. A. Ingilby	...	...	..	Lincoln (North Division).
George Grote	...	...	...	London.
John Arthur Roebuck	...	...	...	Bath.
Joshua Scholefield	..	...	...	Birmingham.
Thomas Attwood	...	...	...	"
J. S. Buckingham	...	...	...	Sheffield.
Daniel Gastrell	...	...	...	Wakefield.
Wm. Downe Gillon	...	...	...	Falkirk, Lanark, etc.
Nicholas A. Vigors	...	...	...	Carlo County.
Captain F. Macnamara	...	...	..	Ennis.
Feargus O'Connor	...	..	...	Cork County.
George Standish Barry	...	...	...	" "
Daniel Callaghan	...	...	...	Cork City.
H. Baldwin	...	...	...	" "
W. J. O'Neill Daunt	...	...	...	Mallow.
John O'Connell	...	...	...	Youghal.
Daniel O'Connell	...	...	...	Dublin City.
Edward S. Ruthven	...	...	...	" "

Charles O'Connell	...	...	...	Kerry.
Maurice O'Connell	...	...	...	Tralee.
Hon. Pierce Butler	...	...	..	Kilkenny County.
William Francis Finn	...	...	...	" "
Edward Ruthven	...	...	...	Kildare.
Nicholas Fitzsimon	...	...	...	King's County.
William Roche	...	..	...	Limerick.
David Roche	...	...	...	"
Andrew Carew O'Dwyer	...	...	...	Drogheda.
Henry Grattan	...	...	...	Meath.
Morgan O'Connell	...	...	...	"
Patrick Lalor	...	...	...	Queen's County.
Richard Lalor Sheil	...	...	...	Tipperary.
Dominick Ronayne	...	...	...	Clonmel.
John Mathew Galway	...	...	...	Waterford County.
John Hyacinth Talbot	...	...	...	New Ross.

1835.

John Ramsbottom	...	...	...	Windsor.
Sir Wm. Molesworth, Bart.	...	...	...	Cornwall (East Division).
James Kennedy	...	...	...	Tiverton.
Cornthwaite J. Hector	...	...	...	Petersfield.
John Fielden	...	...	...	Oldham.
William Cobbett	...	...	...	"
Joseph Hume	...	...	...	Middlesex.
Thos. S. Duncombe	...	...	...	Finsbury.
Thomas Wakley	...	...	...	"
George Grote	...	...	...	London.
Sir S. St. B. Whalley	...	...	...	Marylebone.
De Lacy Evans	...	...	...	Westminster.
John Arthur Roebuck	...	...	...	Bath.
John Temple Leader	...	...	...	Bridgewater.
Daniel Whittle Harvey	...	...	...	Southwark.
Thomas Attwood	...	...	...	Birmingham.
Joshua Scholefield	...	...	...	"
J. S. Buckingham	...	...	..	Sheffield.
Daniel Gastrell	...	...	...	Wakefield.
John Bowring	...	...	..	Kilmarnock.
Alex. Graham Speirs	...	...	...	Paisley.
Nicholas Aylward Vigors	...	...	...	Carlo County.
Feargus O'Connor	...	...	...	Cork.
G. Standish Barry	...	...	...	"
John O'Connell	...	...	...	Youghal.
Daniel O'Connell	...	...	...	Dublin City.
Edward S. Ruthven	...	...	...	" "
Martin Joseph Blake	...	...	...	Galway Town.
Morgan J. O'Connell	...	...	...	Kerry.
Maurice O'Connell	...	...	...	Tralee.

Hon. Pierce Butler	...	...	...	Kilkenny County.
Wm. Francis Finn	...	...	...	” ”
Edward Ruthven	...	...	...	Kildare.
Nicholas Fitzsimon	...	...	...	King's County.
William Roche	...	...	...	Limerick County.
David Roche	...	...	...	” ”
Andrew Carew O'Dwyer		..	...	Drogheda.
Wm. Sharman Crawford	...	...		Dundalk.
Sir Wm. Brabazon, Bart.		...	...	Mayo.
Morgan O'Connell	...	...	...	Meath.
Henry Grattan	...	...	...	”
Richard Lalor Sheil	...	...	...	Tipperary.
Dominick Ronayne	Clonmel.
John Maher	Wexford County.
James Power	” ”
John Hyacinth Talbot		New Ross.

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